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chopTalk

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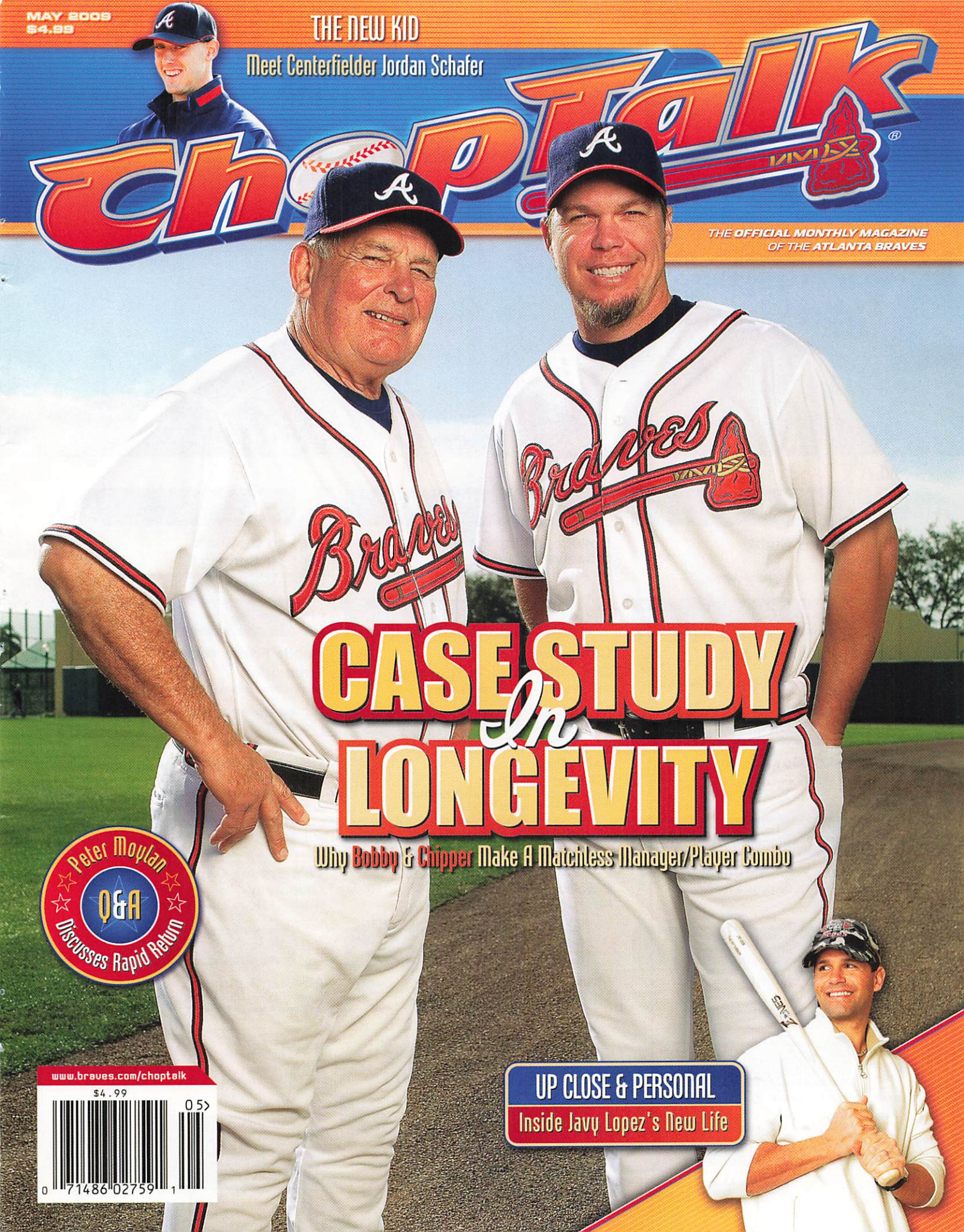

CASE STUDY *In* LONGEVITY

Why Bobby & Chipper Make A Matchless Manager/Player Combo

Peter Moylan Q&A Discusses Rapid Return

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

Inside Javy Lopez's New Life

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THE THRILL OF TURNER FIELD

MAY

1 — FRIDAY 7:30 PM — HOUSTON ASTROS
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Spectacular post-game fireworks display

2 — SATURDAY 3:30 PM — HOUSTON ASTROS
College, Military & AAA Discounts
2-for-1 Upper Box tickets with student, service or AAA ID**

3 — SUNDAY 1:30 PM — HOUSTON ASTROS
Bark in the Park All-Star Sunday
Pregame Alumni Meet & Greet and Kids Run the Bases following the game

4 — MONDAY 7:00 PM — NEW YORK METS
College, Military & AAA Discounts
2-for-1 Upper Box tickets with student, service or AAA ID**

5 — TUESDAY 7:00 PM — NEW YORK METS
Cinco de Mayo Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday
Buy one get one FREE Upper Reserved tickets**

15 — FRIDAY 7:30 PM — ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Spectacular post-game fireworks display

16 — SATURDAY 7:00 PM — ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS
Jerseys Off Our Backs
Presented by Majestic

17 — SUNDAY 1:30 PM — ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS
Latin Day All-Star Sunday
Pregame Alumni Meet & Greet and Kids Run the Bases following the game

18 — MONDAY 7:00 PM — COLORADO ROCKIES
College, Military & AAA Discounts
2-for-1 Upper Box tickets with student, service or AAA ID**

19 — TUESDAY 7:00 PM — COLORADO ROCKIES
Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday
Buy one get one FREE Upper Reserved tickets**

20 — WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM — COLORADO ROCKIES
2-for-1 Wednesday Ticket Discount
Buy one get one FREE Field/Terrace Pavilion**

21 — THURSDAY 7:00 PM — COLORADO ROCKIES
70's Braves Cap Giveaway
Presented by NAPA to the first 10,000 fans

22 — FRIDAY 7:30 PM — TORONTO BLUE JAYS
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Spectacular post-game fireworks display

23 — SATURDAY 7:00 PM — TORONTO BLUE JAYS
Memorial Day Military Appreciation Day

24 — SUNDAY 1:30 PM — TORONTO BLUE JAYS
All-Star Sunday
Pregame Alumni Meet & Greet and Kids Run the Bases following the game

** Excludes NYY & BOS series

JUNE																		
1 MON	2 CHI 7:00pm TUE PTV	3 CHI 7:00pm WED PTV	4 CHI 7:00pm THU SS	5 MIL 7:30pm FRI PTV	6 MIL 7:00pm SAT PTV	7 MIL 1:30pm SUN FSS	8 PIT 7:00pm MON SS	9 PIT 7:00pm TUE PTV	10 PIT 7:00pm WED PTV	11 PIT 1:00pm THU SS	12 @BAL 7:00pm FRI SS	13 @BAL 7:00pm SAT SS	14 @BAL 1:30pm SUN FSS	15 MON	16 @CIN 7:00pm TUE SS	17 @CIN 7:00pm WED SS	18 @CIN 12:30pm THU SS
19 @BOS 7:00pm FRI PTV	20 @BOS 7:00pm SAT PTV	21 @BOS 1:30pm SUN FSS	22 MON	23 NYY 7:00pm TUE PTV	24 NYY 7:00pm WED PTV	25 NYY 7:00pm THU PTV	26 BOS 7:30pm FRI PTV	27 BOS 4:00pm SAT FOX	28 BOS 1:30pm SUN FSS	29 MON	PHI 7:00pm TUE PTV							

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Braves

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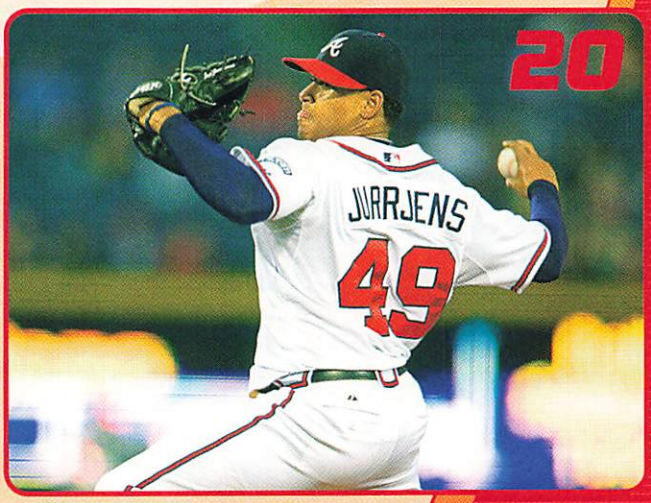

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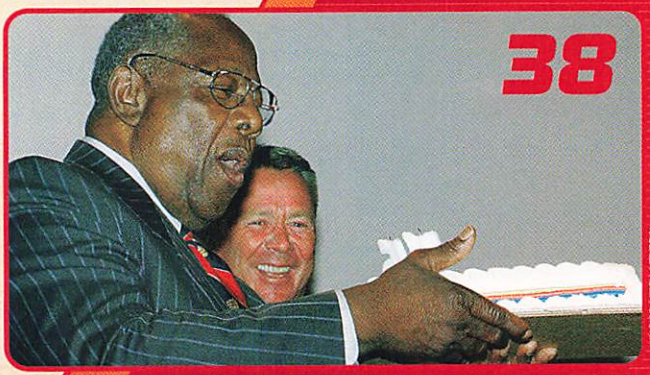
ATLANTA BRAVES



MOBILE PRESS-REGISTER

COVER CREDITS

BOBBY COX AND CHIPPER JONES by Allison Shirreffs

Jordan Schafer and Javy Lopez: Allison Shirreffs

Design by Clark Odom

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VOLUME 5, NUMBER 5

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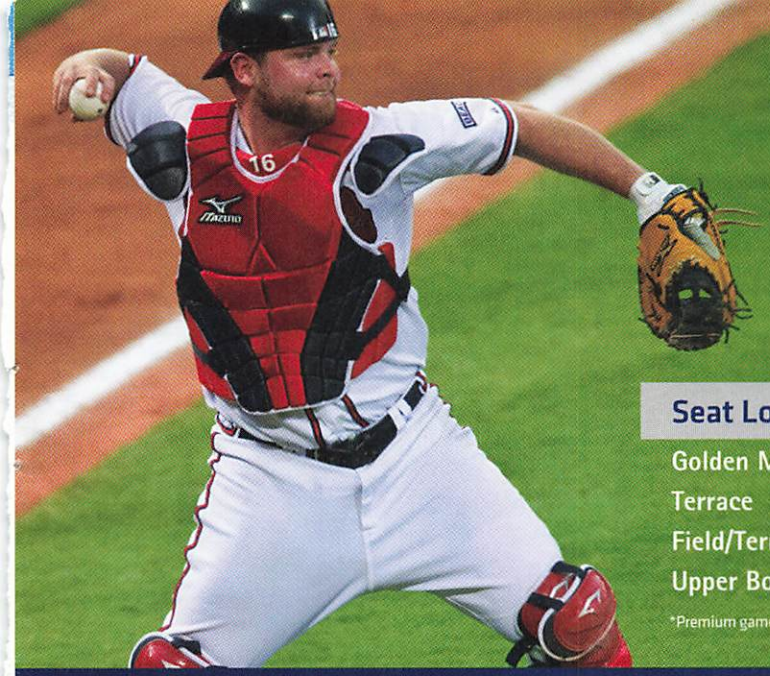

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APRIL

			1	2	3 DET*	4 DET*
5 PHI	6	7 PHI	8 PHI	9	10 WAS	11 WAS
12 WAS	13	14 FLA	15 FLA	16 FLA	17 PIT	18 PIT
19 PIT	20 WAS	21 WAS	22 WAS	23	24 CIN	25 CIN
26 CIN	27 STL	28 STL	29 STL	30		

MAY

					1 HOU	2 HOU
3 HOU	4 NYM	5 NYM	6 FLA	7 FLA	8 PHI	9 PHI
10 PHI	11 NYM	12 NYM	13 NYM	14	15 ARI	16 ARI
17 ARI	18 COL	19 COL	20 COL	21 COL	22 TOR	23 TOR
24 TOR	25 SF	26 SF	27 SF	28 ARI	29 ARI	30 ARI
31 ARI						

JUNE

	1	2 CHI	3 CHI	4 CHI	5 MIL	6 MIL
7 MIL	8 PIT	9 PIT	10 PIT	11 PIT	12 BAL	13 BAL
14 BAL	15	16 CIN	17 CIN	18 CIN	19 BOS	20 BOS
21 BOS	22	23 NYY	24 NYY	25 NYY	26 BOS	27 BOS
28 BOS	29	30 PHI				

JULY

			1 PHI	2 PHI	3 WAS	4 WAS
5 WAS	6 CHI	7 CHI	8 CHI	9 COL	10 COL	11 COL
12 COL	13 14 15 ALL STAR GAME ST LOUIS			16 NYM	17 NYM	18 NYM
19 NYM	20 SF	21 SF	22 SF	23 SF	24 MIL	25 MIL
26 MIL	27	28 FLA	29 FLA	30 FLA	31 LAD	

AUGUST

						1 LAD
2 LAD	3 SD	4 SD	5 SD	6 LAD	7 LAD	8 LAD
9 LAD	10	11 WAS	12 WAS	13	14 PHI	15 PHI
16 PHI	17	18 NYM	19 NYM	20 NYM	21 FLA	22 FLA
23 FLA	24	25 SD	26 SD	27 SD	28 PHI	29 PHI
30 PHI	31 FLA					

SEPT/OCT

	1 FLA	2 FLA	3 FLA	4 CIN	5 CIN	
6 CIN	7	8 HOU	9 HOU	10 HOU	11 STL	12 STL
13 STL	14	15 NYM	16 NYM	17 NYM	18 PHI	19 PHI
20 PHI	21 NYM	22 NYM	23 NYM	24	25 WAS	26 WAS
27 WAS	28 FLA	29 FLA	30 FLA	1 WAS	2 WAS	3 WAS
4 WAS						

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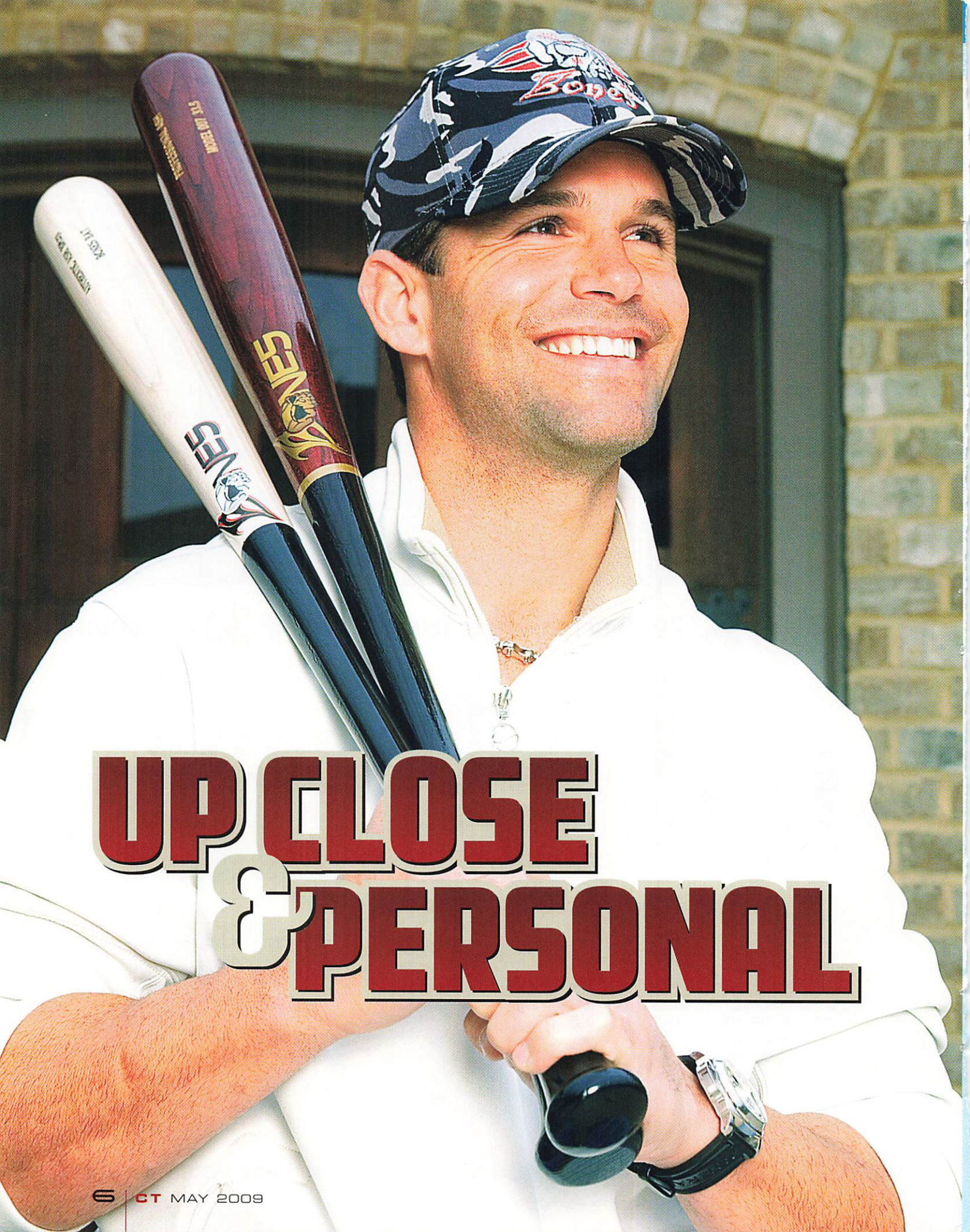


UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

An Inside Look At Javy Lopez's New Life Outside Baseball

The Lopezes moved into this 8,500-square-foot home that overlooks a lake and a Greg Norman-designed golf course in 2007.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

STANDING NEAR THE MEMORABILIA CABINET in the game room of his spacious home in the northeast Atlanta suburb of Suwanee, former Braves catcher Javy Lopez (1992-2003) recalled the most exciting moment of his memorable career.

It wasn't claiming his Silver Slugger Award after hitting 43 home runs in 2003, or being named the National League Championship Series Most Valuable Player in 1996 (hitting .542 to spur the remarkable comeback to beat St. Louis), or the first of his three All-Star Game selections in 1997 when he hit a home run in his first All-Star at-bat, or even winning the World Series in 1995.

It was September 19, 1992, the day he was called up to the major leagues after starting catcher Greg Olson's leg was broken in a violent collision at home plate. The surprise callup marked the first time Lopez, 21 years old at the time, ever stepped into a major league stadium.

"I went to Cincinnati from Chattanooga (where he was playing with Double-A Greenville)," said Lopez, 39. "I was so awed. I'm kind of glad for the way it worked out. For some reason, it never worked out for me to go to a major league game (before that), and I was able to save that moment for my callup."

Now two full seasons removed from the game, Lopez admits that leaving baseball wasn't easy.

"Once you call it quits, once you hang up the glove, it's like... okay, now what?" he said. "Every player has to go through that. I was 37 when I decided to retire for sure. You're never ready for it. Even if you plan for it, when the day comes, it's still difficult. The good thing about my situation is that the storm is already passed."

When he thinks of his baseball career, Lopez is grateful and amazed.

"I had 15 years of success that can never be taken away from me," he said. "Now I'm looking at the opportunities I have in my future."

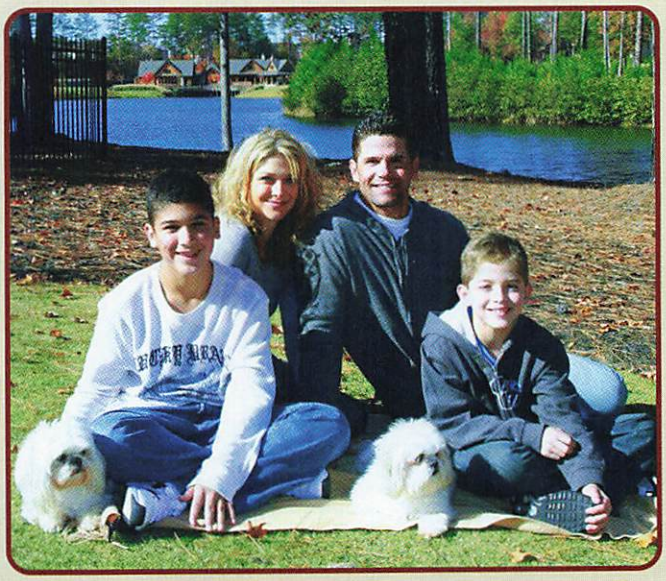
ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Javy and Gina Lopez with Javy Jr. (L) and Kelvin and their Shih Tzus, Blanca (L) and Lucy Lu, outside their home in the northeast Atlanta suburb of Suwanee.

It's a future he shares with his wife, Gina, who he married in 2004, and his two sons from his first marriage, Javy Jr. (14) and Kelvin (10). And it's a future that includes diverse interests, including riding motorcycles, playing golf, and pursuing a new business venture - Bones Bat Company (April '09 CT).

"I visited major league camps, Atlanta, Washington and the New York Mets, this spring training, but I wasn't as prepared as I thought," said Lopez about his recent marketing venture for Bones. "I didn't have a website, I didn't care for the brochure I had."

Nevertheless, Lopez garnered bat orders from a number of Braves players, including Yunel Escobar, Chipper Jones and Matt Diaz, and took bats from other players in order to make samples



SPECIAL

ALLISON SHREFFS

Several Braves have already ordered from Lopez"s new line of bats, and he hopes to eventually expand the Bones brand to incude catcher's equipment.

for them. After spending time in his native Puerto Rico during the World Baseball Classic, Lopez returned to Atlanta in late March to work with a website developer on his web site - bonesbat.com (not yet online at press time) - and on sprucing up the Bones logo.

"I wanted to make it (logo) easier to read, but still incorporate all the elements I wanted in it," he said.

Starting a bat company actually is Lopez's post-baseball Plan B. The downward turn of the economy dashed his hopes to start a baseball academy. Nevertheless, it's the plan he's going with right now.

"If you have a Plan B already up and running (before retirement), it's probably easier," he said. "Some players are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to coach immediately after leaving playing, like Eddie Perez. It makes the transition easier."

But Lopez isn't complaining. His experience as a hitter and knowledge of the game, as well as connections with players still active give him a unique advantage in starting a bat company.

He first located a family owned company in Ridgeway, Illinois, that turned out quality bats made from ash and maple. Lopez then secured licensing rights from Major League Baseball, a time-consuming but necessary capital expense, and selected a number of different bat colors to market. And he's learned a little about the product along the way.

Ash is the traditional wood for bats, but maple bats became popular over the past 10 years because the wood is harder and the ball tends to travel further off them. The downside of maple bats is their reputation for breaking in an explosive fashion. Maple bats are now required to have a natural stain on the handle so that the grain of the wood is visible and easily inspected.

"A spot of dye is put on the wood," said Lopez. "If the dye spreads in any direction other than toward the bat head or bat handle, it cannot be used."

Eventually, Lopez would love to see the company succeed to the point where he's marketing not just bats but catcher's gear, too, all under the Bones label.

"But we're going one step at a time," he said. "We'll get the website up and bats out there and see what happens."

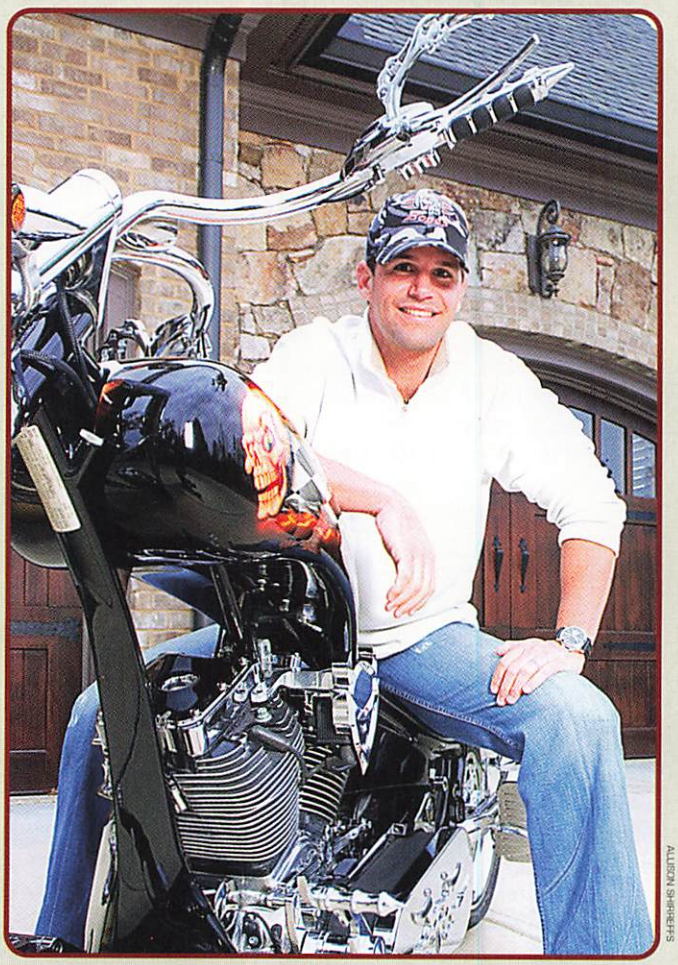
In the meantime, Lopez continues to enjoy retirement. His number-one hobby is riding motorcycles, something he always wanted to do but never pursued until his second season with the Baltimore Orioles. He owns two very different motorcycles - a custom-built Rucker Performance Gauntlet chopper and a customized Harley-Davidson Road King with unusual origin. He bought it after spotting it in a GEICO television commercial.

"After I saw the commercial, I called the Daytona Harley-Davidson shop where they filmed the commercial and asked if they had the bike on the floor to sell. They did. They had just put it out," said Lopez. "The paint job really attracted me. I had never seen anything like it."

He rides the Harley when he's taking leisurely trips on Georgia's highways and mountain by-ways. But when he's going to the city, he pulls out the Gauntlet.

"The chopper is a show stopper," said Lopez. "When I'm riding down the highway, it gets a lot of attention from the other drivers, because you don't see a bike like this every day. It's like someone driving a Lamborghini."

The sleek chopper is painted black with an orange flame detail replicating shredded metal to reveal a black and white checkered

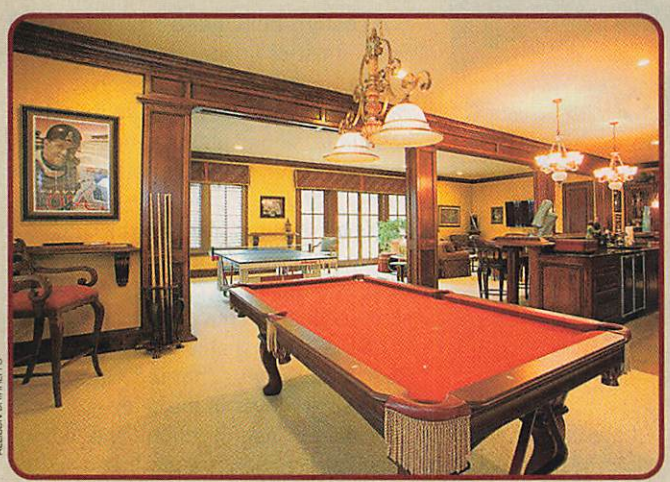


ALLISON SHREFFS

Javy has two motorcycles, including this custom-built Rucker Performance Gauntlet chopper that's painted black with an orange flame detail and a skull motif.

Once an avid enthusiast of radio-controlled model airplanes, Javy maintains his fleet but now spends more time playing golf.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

he said. "Every Sunday we meet and decide where we're going to go. We ride out for a couple hours, have lunch, usually visit a Harley-Davidson store, and then all go our separate ways."

Sons Javy Jr., and Kelvin live with Lopez every other week during the school year and share time between their parents' homes during the summer. Both boys love all sports, and Javy Jr., played football and baseball for his middle school. Just don't look for him behind the plate.

"He plays first base and outfield. He doesn't want to be a catcher, doesn't want to block pitches," said Lopez, who hasn't pressured his son to follow in his footsteps. "If you want to play there, you have to love it. If you don't have that feeling for it, it's better to not even try. Just move on and be a first baseman."

The Lopezes moved into their Suwanee home, a builder's spec

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

flag. The skull motif, Lopez's favorite, is found in details throughout the bike - painted on the bumpers, embossed in the leather seat, in the wheel spokes, and the coil cover.

"I looked through magazines to find all the details," said Lopez. "I didn't want the skull to look evil. I wanted it to look friendly or funny, sort of like a joker, almost cartoonish. I like skulls, but not evil skulls."

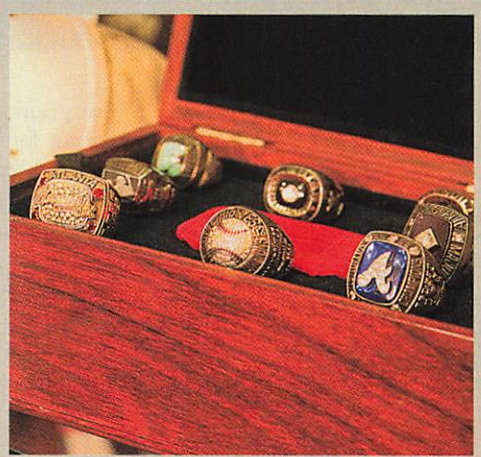
Lopez regularly hits the road for weekly motorcycle rides with two different groups, his Harley-riding buddies and his chopper-riding friends, and even Gina rides with him from time to time.

"In the summertime, I ride almost every weekend,"

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

The terrace level of the house includes a game room (above) that has a ping pong table and a pool table, and the home theater (R) features framed movie posters and a life-sized replica of Yoda from Star Wars.

PHOTOS: ALLISON SHIRREFFS



Much of Javy's memorabilia, including his championship rings (inset) and a replica of the 1995 World Series trophy, are in this custom-built cabinet.

house, in 2007. Gina and her decorator made changes in color and finishes that warmed the interior, creating a surprisingly homey feel to the 8,500 square feet. The main floor features a striking foyer, a wood-paneled office for Gina, formal living and dining rooms, spacious kitchen and breakfast room, and a comfortable family room. There are six upstairs bedrooms.

Lopez loves spending time in the screened porch that's complete with a wood-burning fireplace. The back deck overlooks woods, a lake, and in the distance, the Greg Norman designed golf course.

Often times, the Lopezes can be found on the terrace level of the house playing cut-throat ping pong in the game room, which also houses a pool table, built-in bar and wine cooler.

"This is a very social neighborhood," said Lopez. "We entertain back and forth. It's not always fancy. Sometimes we'll just meet at someone's house and drink wine and watch American Idol!"

The home theater is decorated with framed favorite movie posters - "Forrest Gump" and "Star Wars" for Javy, "Rocky" for Gina, and "Norbit" for the boys. A life-sized replica of "Yoda" from Star Wars stands in the corner, a gift to Lopez from a Pepsi bottling company.

Other rooms include the guest room and bath, home gym, and a large room where Lopez occasionally tinkers with his collection of radio-controlled model airplanes. He maintains his license for those times when he feels the urge to fly a plane on a par 5 hole on the golf course. But his latest sporting passion is golf.

"The time I used to spend flying planes is now spent on golf," he said.

A custom-built, glass-fronted cabinet holds most of Lopez's baseball memorabilia, including his World Series replica trophy and rings. There are milestone baseballs, signed photos, and magazine covers. His Silver Slugger stands in one corner, and a framed Braves jersey bearing the number 43, for the catcher's franchise-record 43 home runs he hit in 2003, is hung in the opposite corner. He also set the catcher's franchise record for RBIs (109) that season when The Sporting News named him NL Comeback Player of the Year.

Lopez is too busy and focused to spend much time looking back, but when he stops to reflect, he's struck again by the good fortune he had to enjoy such a remarkable career. He caught for three of the best pitchers of his generation - Tom Glavine, John Smoltz, and (occasionally) Greg Maddux, and maintains a close relationship with the Braves organization. After a failed comeback attempt last year in spring training, he was invited to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Turner Field opener.

He threw out the first pitch at the Rome Braves' opener this year, and was one of several players celebrated at the final Braves' game played at Richmond last Sept. 1.

Known for his gracious demeanor, Lopez was, and remains, one of the most popular players in Atlanta history. And to this day, he's still remarkably humble about his stardom and the high level of recognition he receives.

"I go out and am just another person," he said. "I definitely get recognized, but people are always nice and respect my time. It's nice to hear that people still care about me."

PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

A CASE STUDY IN BASEBALL LONGEVITY

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Chipper already owns the record for most games to start a career under one manager, and with his new contract extension, he can really distance himself from the pack if Bobby Cox stays on the job with him.

WAY BACK IN 1990, Braves *general manager* Bobby Cox - just weeks before becoming Braves *manager* Bobby Cox - used the first pick of the June draft on a Florida high school prodigy with a kid's nickname. And in 1993, when Cox got his first look at that phenom - Chipper Jones - in a major-league uniform, he was pleased to see how well his pick panned out.

"We came out winners there," Cox told reporters at the time. "Chipper is the best athlete on the team. I really think I could play him anywhere and he'd be good. He's also a leader and a winner. He's going to be around for a long time."

That moment might go down in history as one of the few times that Cox didn't praise a player highly enough.

On one hand, with the way baseball managers shuffle in and out of jobs like patrons at a deli, it seems almost unthinkable that Chipper Jones has played his entire 15-year-plus major league career under one manager.

Jones holds the record for most games to start a career under one manager with 2,023 (entering 2009) and counting. The next closest player, Willie Davis of the Dodgers under Walter Alston, had 1,952.

Even more impressively, Chipper's 408 career home runs entering 2009 are the most ever to *begin* a career under one manager (88 more than even Mickey Mantle/Casey Stengel)... And with just 30 more home runs under Cox, he'd put them in third place - behind Babe Ruth/Miller Huggins and Mark McGwire/Tony La Russa - for most homers under one manager.

Okay, so it's obvious Jones and Cox have a bond that transcends the typical manager/player relationship. But why? What connects these two very different competitors - the never-an-unkind-word Cox and the say-what-you-mean Jones? How is it that a relationship, which began when Jones was a teenager and Cox was wearing regular clothes to work, has grown to become one of the milestones in baseball longevity?

To answer those questions, we have to go back to the dark days of 1990, back when the Braves were little more than an almost-guaranteed series win for the rest of the National League. Thanks to their wretched record, they had the top pick in the draft, and Cox staked Atlanta's future on Chipper. Although Jones seemed barely big enough to hang a uniform on his shoulders, he got a quick taste of the Cox way of doing business.

"He immediately put pressure on me to perform by making me the first pick in the draft," Jones recently recalled. "He's one of those guys you want to perform for, not embarrass, and it was my duty to try and make him come out of that situation smelling like a rose. Little did I know..."

By the time Jones reached the majors for good in 1995, Cox had amassed a roster full of All-Stars. Nonetheless, he immediately found room for his hypertalented new third baseman.

"He quickly became like the favorite grandfather, who always wants best for you, always puts you in the situation to succeed," Jones said. "Bobby's done that with me since Day 1, when he put me in the three-hole [third spot in the batting order] my very first start in front of guys like Freddy McGriff and David Justice. He knew that was going to be my best opportunity to succeed."

Like a grandfather, Cox took great pride in watching Jones grow from a wide-eyed draft pick to one of the sharpest ballplayers in the game... from a kid with power but no discipline into the reigning National League batting champion.

"He was so good back then," Cox recently said of Jones' early days, "and he's even better now."

Under Cox, Jones has won an MVP, a batting title, six All-Star berths, and a garage full of other awards.

"He's been with us now for a decade and a half," Cox said. "You have to have a strong relationship to be around a guy that long. I've sure enjoyed having Chipper around."

> "CHIPPER'S 408 CAREER HOME RUNS ENTERING 2009 ARE THE MOST EVER TO BEGIN A CAREER UNDER ONE MANAGER."

With Jones signing a three-year contract extension through 2012 (with a vesting option for 2013, the year he turns 41), it certainly appears he'll close his career as a Brave. Will Cox be there as Jones calls it a career?

"I certainly hope that Bobby stays for the duration of my stay here," he said. "Bobby was a big factor [in signing the extension]. It'll be the saddest day we've had here in Atlanta when he finally does retire."

For Jones' sake, Cox better stay until No. 10 hangs it up. No use asking Chipper to change bosses now!

ATLANTA BRAVES

Greg Maddux will be inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame and also have his uniform number (31) retired July 17.

DOGGIE'S DAY

THE BRAVES have designated July 17 as Doggie's Day - but this is not a canine event. Greg Maddux, known as "Doggie" to his teammates, will be inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame, and will receive an even bigger honor when his uniform No. 31 is officially retired - only the sixth player in franchise history to be so recognized.

The 43-year-old Maddux, who retired after the 2008 season with 355 career victories, eighth all-time, will be the guest of honor at a luncheon Friday, July 17, when the Braves host the Mets, and he'll also be recognized in an on-field ceremony prior to the 7:30 p.m. game. For information about tickets to the luncheon, call (404) 614-2310.

In 11 seasons with the Braves (1993-2003), Maddux won 194 games and three of his four consecutive National League Cy Young Awards. He won his only World Series ring with the Braves in 1995. He set club records for winning percentage (.688, 194-88) and career ERA (2.63). He also holds the Braves' record for lowest ERA in a season (1.54 in 1994).

The only other Braves to have their numbers retired are Hank Aaron (44), Eddie Mathews (41), Dale Murphy (3), Phil Niekro (35) and Warren Spahn (21). Jackie Robinson's No. 42 is retired by all major league clubs, but he played his entire career with the Dodgers.

SWEET SOUNDS

FOR THE FIRST TIME in five years, Braves fans singing along to "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" during the seventh-inning stretch are doing so to live organ music. Matthew Kaminski, 32, a local jazz organist and piano teacher, is the new organist at Turner Field.

"Being from Chicago, I always went to Cubs games," said Kaminski (R). "Seeing Harry Caray sing, 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame' with the organist... I always wanted to be that organist. Never in my wildest dreams did I think it would happen."

Kaminski learned about the organist position from one of his students and was called in for an interview with Scott Cunningham, the Braves' director of game entertainment.

"(Scott) wanted to know if I knew the game, asked me what types of songs I could play, and told me what he was looking for," Kaminski said. "They want someone who can be interactive, who can add to what's happening on the field. I also brought them a CD of me playing a variety of songs."

Kaminski's keyboard is set up in the third row of the press box where he has an excellent view of the field. He wears a headset so the producer can talk to him during the game. "Having someone in my ear is probably the biggest adjustment," he said. "They're giving me direction about when to play. I have to be ready at all times."

PATTY RASMUSSEN

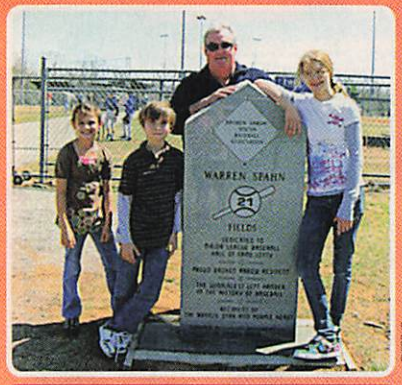
For a 7:35 p.m. game, Kaminski gets to the ballpark in time for the 4 o'clock production meeting. After setting up his equipment and music books, he starts playing at 6 during the visiting team's batting practice.

"I play happy family friendly music," said Kaminski. "I play the accordion and sometimes play in a polka band, so I think I'll probably throw a polka in there at least once a game."

Kaminski says his biggest thrill to date was playing, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," and hearing the crowd sing along. "It was an awesome feeling," he said. "I definitely feel like I have one of the happiest jobs at the ballpark."

- PATTY RASMUSSEN

NOT FORGOTTEN



SPECIAL

Greg Spahn, with children (L-R) Morgan, Logan and Taylor, at the new Warren Spahn monument in Broken Arrow, Okla.

WARREN SPAHN is gone, but certainly not forgotten by those who knew and loved him in his adopted home state of Oklahoma. Two tributes to the winningest lefthander in history (363, 356 as a Brave in 1942, '46-64) were recently unveiled, one in Hartshorne, where he lived during his playing career, and the other in the Tulsa suburb of Broken Arrow, where he lived in his later years.

Hartshorne, a rural community in southeast Oklahoma, dedicated a new "Home of Warren Spahn" sign in March that includes his Hall of Fame plaque and an original color painting by artist Kelly Colbert. The Spahn family still owns the Diamond Star ranch in Hartshorne, and he is buried in Elmwood Cemetery. Spahn died in November 2003, three months after attending the dedication of his statue in Turner Field's Monument Grove.

On April 4, four baseball diamonds at Indian Springs Sports Complex in Broken Arrow were named "Warren Spahn Memorial Fields."

An unveiling ceremony was held in conjunction with Broken Arrow Youth Baseball's opening day. Greg Spahn, the lefthander's son, and Broken Arrow mayor Wade McCaleb tossed honorary first pitches. Greg Spahn's 10-year-old son, Logan, named for former Braves shortstop great Johnny Logan (1951-61), plays baseball at the facility.

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

PUT A TRAIN IN THE MUSEUM

INSIDE THE IVAN ALLEN JR. BRAVES MUSEUM

at Turner Field stands a 26-foot restored cross section of an old Pullman railroad car. Various theories exist on how it got there.

"I have heard everything from, 'We built the museum around it' to 'It was dropped in by aliens,'" said Jackson McQuigg of the Atlanta History Center, before setting the record straight. "No alien assistance was required."

The railroad car itself, now an exhibit that shows how Milwaukee Braves players used to travel, was built in 1954. It came from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. McQuigg explained how a cross section of the 85-foot long car was sawed out in December 1996. Then it was lifted onto a flatbed truck. Several days later, it arrived in Mableton, Georgia, outside Atlanta.

At that time, the Olympic Stadium was being transformed into Turner Field, and the brick plaza was not yet built. This made the process possible, but challenging. First, a track repair company constructed a temporary railroad track into the museum. It extended 20-25 feet into what is now the plaza area and took one day to build.

After bringing in the railroad car (below) on the same flatbed truck, a crane first lifted the undercarriage or "trucks" – the part that includes the wheels and springs – and put it down onto the tracks. Then it took the car itself and placed it on top of the trucks.

"Basically, at that point, we had a little railroad," said McQuigg. "We had part of a Pullman car, tracks, and our locomotive was a backhoe. We shoved the railroad car into the track that it now sits on."

It took a team of 10 people about three hours to move the car to its permanent location.

- STEVE FALL

BRAVES MUSEUM & HALL OF FAME

CHIPPER IS TRUE BLUE (AND RED)

HANK AARON didn't play his entire career with the Braves. Neither did **Dale Murphy**, **Phil Niekro**, **Eddie Mathews** or **Warren Spahn**. From all indications, though, **Chipper Jones** will do what those five all-time greats didn't accomplish.

The Braves announced Mar. 31 that they agreed to terms with Chipper on a three-year contract extension. He was due to become a free agent after this season, but the extension runs through 2012, with a vesting option for 2013, and virtually guarantees that Chipper will play his entire career in a Braves uniform.

"This contract ensures that Chipper will play his whole career as a Brave, which was a key factor for us, our fans and for Chipper," **Frank Wren** said.

The defending National League batting champion, as well as the 1999 NL Most Valuable Player and a six-time All-Star, Chipper has compiled one of the most impressive careers in history by a switch-hitter. Entering the season, his .310 lifetime batting average ranks second all-time among switch-hitters to Hall of Famer **Frankie Frisch** (.316). His 408 home runs rank third to **Mickey Mantle** (536) and **Eddie Murray** (504). And he's the only switch-hitter in history with at least 300 home runs and a .300 career batting average.

Chipper's .364 average to lead the NL last year was a league record for a switch-hitter and second only in history to Mantle's .365 (1957) in that department. He also hit 22 home runs last year, eclipsing 20 for the 14th straight season to tie Mathews as the only players in history to open their career with 14 consecutive 20-homer seasons.

Jones, who turned 37 April 24, is the all-time Atlanta leader in nearly every offensive category, and ranks ninth among active players in career batting average, eighth in on-base percentage (.408), 11th in home runs, 12th in runs (1,378), 12th in RBIs (1,374), and 13th in doubles (449).

ATLANTA BRAVES

Chipper Jones reacts to the crowd's applause as he picks up the Silver Bat he won for leading the NL in batting average last year. Brian McCann looks on as he waits to receive his Silver Slugger Award as the best-hitting catcher in the NL.

Only nine active players with at least 10 years of service entered this season having spent their entire careers with one team, and Chipper, in his 16th season, leads the pack.

2-FOR-2

The "new-look" Braves made doubly good first impressions, winning the season opener, 4-1, at Philadelphia, April 5, then beating Washington, 6-5 in 10 innings, on Opening Night at Turner Field April 10.

In the season opener before an ESPN audience, new staff ace **Derek Lowe** was extremely hard on the World Champion Phillies. He worked eight shutout innings, allowing just two hits and no walks. It was the first time any pitcher ever allowed two or less baserunners in eight innings at Citizens Bank Park. He was backed with home runs by **Brian McCann**, Jeff **Francoeur** and rookie **Jordan Schafer**.

A two-hour-plus rain delay interrupted the home opener, but **Kelly Johnson** made sure it didn't dampen the festive spirits by delivering a one-out single in the 10th to score Schafer with the winning run. **Yunel Escobar**'s 3-run homer in the third was the Braves' big blow, and Escobar, Johnson and McCann all had three hits apiece.

DEALING

The Braves and Detroit Tigers made a trade Mar. 30, with Atlanta sending center field candidate **Josh Anderson** to the American League club in exchange for right-handed reliever **Rudy Darrow**. The 25-year-old Darrow was assigned to Double-A Mississippi.

Darrow is entering his fourth pro season. He has allowed just one home run and has limited opponents to a .220 batting average, with 101 strikeouts and 37 walks in 103 2/3 innings over the last three seasons. Last year, he was a combined 5-3 with a 2.02 ERA in 47 outings between West Michigan (A) and Erie (Double A), and held right-handed hitters to a .168 batting average (20-for-119). A sidearm pitcher, he posted an outstanding groundball-to-flyball ratio of 4.8 last season.

Anderson, who was out of options, batted .294 in 40 games for the Braves last season after being acquired from the Houston Astros in November 2007.

THE ROSTER

The Braves set their 25-man roster for Opening Day with a series of moves that included optioning **Gregor Blanco** and **Manny Acosta** to Triple-A Gwinnett. In addition, **Tom Glavine** (left shoulder rehabilitation) and catcher **David Ross** (strained right groin) were placed on the 15-day disabled list, retroactive to April 2 and April 1,

respectively. **Tim Hudson** (right elbow rehabilitation) and **Charlie Morton** (strained left oblique) were previously placed on the DL.

The Braves also optioned left-handed reliever **Boone Logan** and outfielder **Brandon Jones** to Gwinnett. Right-handed reliever **Kris Medlen**, infielder **Brooks Conrad** and catcher **J.C. Boscan** were reassigned to minor league camp.

Also, it was announced that **Jordan Schafer** switched to uniform number 24.

The season-opening roster included 12 pitchers, two catchers, seven infielders and four outfielders:

PITCHERS (12): Jeff Bennett (R), Blaine Boyer (R), Jorge Campillo (R), Buddy Carlyle (R), Mike Gonzalez (L), Jair Jurrjens (R), Kenshin Kawakami (R), Derek Lowe (R), Peter Moylan (R), Eric O'Flaherty (L), Rafael Soriano (R) and Javier Vazquez (R).

CATCHERS (2): Brian McCann and Clint Sammons.

INFIELDERS (7): Yunel Escobar, Omar Infante, Kelly Johnson, Chipper Jones, Casey Kotchman, Greg Norton and Martin Prado.

OUTFIELDERS (4): Garret Anderson, Matt Diaz, Jeff Francoeur and Jordan Schafer.

SHORT HOPS

- **Tom Glavine** was having an excellent spring training until he had to leave a rehab start with Mississippi due to shoulder discomfort April 12. At press time, he was due to have it examined by **Dr. James Andrews**.

- **Kenshin Kawakami** made his U.S. debut April 11 and beat Washington, 5-3, by working six innings of 4-hit ball, striking out eight and walking four at Turner Field.

- All players and other on-field personnel with the Braves and throughout the majors wore uniform No. 42 on April 15 in honor of **Jackie Robinson** breaking the game's color barrier on that date in 1947.

- On April 8, **Garret Anderson** re-aggravated the calf muscle strain that caused him to miss three weeks of March exhibition games. However, the injury was not believed to be serious and he was not expected to miss much playing time.

FRANK WREN
GENERAL MANAGER

AS THE WEATHER WARMS, THE 'PEN WILL IMPROVE

CHIPPER MADE IT VERY CLEAR all winter that he wanted to finish his career as a Brave. And it was a mutual feeling. We wanted him, too. We started having conversations about a contract in February and made very good progress. Then he left for the World Baseball Classic, and we put it on hold. After he got back, we finished it and were able to announce it just before Opening Day.

The fact that he will be with us for four more years, counting this season, and with an option year after that, is great for us, the fans, and the stability and core of the club. The contract runs through 2012, then an option year after that vests if he plays a certain number of games in 2012 or an average number the last couple of years.

Obviously, as a switch-hitter Chipper has put himself in very special company, and he will only continue to grow in that area. There's no doubt he's a Hall of Famer and one of the greatest Braves ever. When he stops playing, you'll be able to count him in a single handful of the greatest Braves, and that says a lot with the history of this organization.

The pitching has been good, and we've swung the bats well so far. I think the power we've shown to this point demonstrates what we think our guys can do up and down the lineup. No one has five or six home runs, but a lot of guys have one or two. That's what our expectation was. We have a lot of guys who can drive in runs and hit it out of the park at opportune times, rather than the focus being on certain spots in the lineup.

> "WHEN (CHIPPER) STOPS PLAYING, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO COUNT HIM IN A SINGLE HANDFUL OF THE GREATEST BRAVES."

We feel the guys in the bullpen are rounding into shape. We felt coming out of spring training that the bullpen would be better in a month than it would be on Opening Day. Some of the guys are just starting to feel good, especially (Rafael) Soriano and (Mike) Gonzalez. (Peter) Moylan pitched well in spring training, then when he upped it to game speed, he had a little setback. But his last outing was outstanding.

The bullpen will get better as the weather gets warmer, based on everyone wasn't quite ready due to surgeries and recovering from them.

You see a lot of that around baseball. The bullpen is one area that takes a while to round into shape once the relievers get into game situations that can't really be duplicated in spring training. It's a whole different environment.

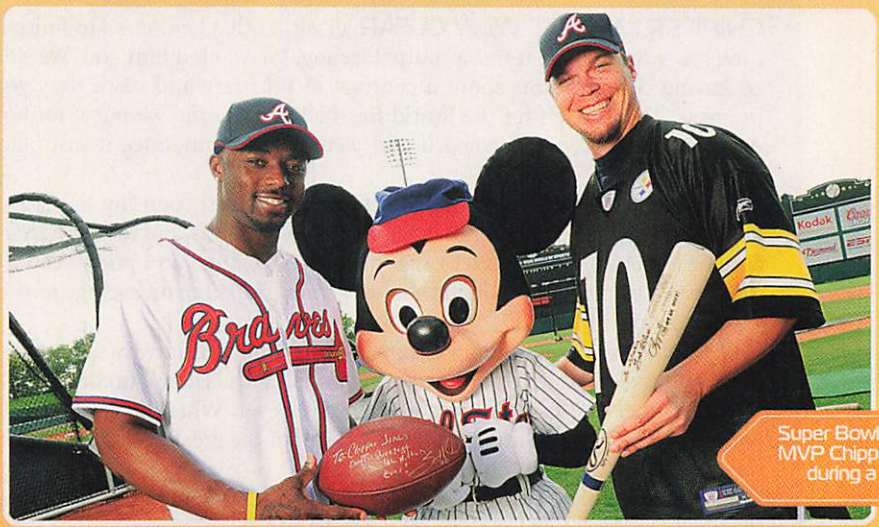
Garret Anderson's injury is not nearly as bad as it was the first time. It's one of those things that since it's early, we're taking extra precautions to get it right. But it's shown that one of our strengths is our bench. Whoever Bobby puts in there, we continue to play very well.

(Kenshin) Kawakami did very well in his first start, especially considering the nerves and all the attention he received. When he got the lead, he really turned it up a notch. He was not going to give it up, and that shows the type of competitor he is. For a first start, it was very good.

Jeff Francoeur has a plan, and he's carrying it out. We're seeing him become more and more consistent. He has to continue to focus on going the other way and staying on the ball longer, and that will help him carry out his plan. He understands that and is dedicated to making it all work.

Jordan Schafer came into spring training totally prepared, which made a big difference in him winning the center field job. He went to winter ball and got as many at-bats as he could before he hurt his hand, and he was ready from the very beginning of camp. Three weeks into camp, we could see that and were able to at least say it was a two-man race - Schafer and Gregor Blanco - so we traded Josh Anderson to Detroit.

DISNEY ENCOUNTER



DISNEY

Super Bowl MVP Santonio Holmes (L) and former NL MVP Chipper Jones tell Mickey Mouse how they did it during a meeting at Disney's Wide World of Sports.

THE BRAVES enjoyed another successful spring training at Disney's Wide World of Sports outside Orlando, in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Some members of the Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers were working out at the Disney complex at the same time, which afforded a meeting between a pair of MVPs, **Chipper Jones**, NL MVP in 1999, and Steelers wide receiver **Santonio Holmes**, MVP of Super Bowl XLIII. The two exchanged No. 10 jerseys and autographed items Mar. 27.

POPULARITY POLL

In spite of missing the post-season for the past three years, the Braves remain one of the most popular teams in Major League Baseball. According to ESPN Sports Poll, a service of TNS Sport, the Braves (4.2 percent of respondents who said they are baseball fans) rank first in the National League in popularity and third in baseball, trailing only the Yankees (6.9 percent) and Red Sox (5.1 percent). Rounding out the top five were the Cubs (3.7 percent) and Mets (2.4 percent). The poll was conducted this past December and January of people in the United States 12 and older. A total of 27,531 people who said they were fans of MLB were polled.

FASHION STATEMENT

Check out the shirts on Braves game day staff. Parking attendants, security staff, ushers, game entertainment staff, ticket takers and guest relations personnel are wearing shirts that contain yarn made from recycled PET plastic bottles. It's part of a combined initiative between Coca-Cola and the Braves to increase recycling at Turner Field and to highlight the benefits of recycling. The shirts feature a Braves logo on the chest, a Coca-Cola Recycling logo on the sleeve, and the Coke "Give it Back" recycling logo on the yoke.

Throughout the season, fans can recycle plastic bottles in more than 250 branded recycling bins and barrels placed around Turner Field. A video will be shown during each game that educates fans on the lifecycle of a 20-ounce Coke bottle, from the point of purchase until it is reused to make apparel. An in-game baseball trivia contest sponsored by Coca-Cola Recycling will give fans an opportunity to win a Braves prize pack that includes items made from recycled plastic bottles.

LEARNING FROM THE BEST

In partnership with the **Cal Ripken Sr.** Foundation, the Braves hosted a clinic for Jr. Braves Coaches from the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs and Atlanta Parks and Recreation on April 11 before the game against the Washington Nationals.

Braves coaches **Glenn Hubbard** and **Eddie Perez** provided training on topics including techniques for teaching baseball fundamentals, running effective practices, proper nutrition, injury prevention, and the Jr. Braves Four Bases of Character - confidence, teamwork, leadership and integrity. The youth coaches also were able to participate in a question and answer session with Hubbard and Perez.

TUNE IN

The Braves entered the season with 164 radio affiliates, the largest play-by-play radio network in sports. The network covers eight states, and the number of affiliates is four more than in 2008. A list of most of this year's affiliates appeared on page 49 of the April issue of ChopTalk. The following affiliates, including WRNL-AM (910) in Richmond, Va., have been added since then.

WJDB 630	Thomasville	AL
WJDB 95.5	Thomasville	AL
WUBL 94.9	Atlanta	GA
WMVG 1450	Milledgeville	GA
WKZR 102.3	Milledgeville	GA
WHSY 950	Hattiesburg	MS
WHNY 1250	McComb	MS
WGHB 1250	Greenville	NC
WDLX 930	Greenville	NC
WSNW103.3	Seneca	SC
WRNL 910	Richmond	VA

EVERY FAN'S MVP

The Braves have teamed with the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, Stone Mountain Park, Six Flags Over Georgia, the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Georgia Department of Economic Development to launch the MVP Ticket Package, which

includes admission to all five attractions for $89, a savings of more than 30 percent.

The Most Valuable Package includes:

- An Outfield Pavilion ticket to any Braves game (retail $26).
- Six Flags Over Georgia admission ticket (retail $39.99).
- Georgia Aquarium admission ticket (retail $26).
- Stone Mountain One-Day Adventure Pass (retail $26).
- World of Coca-Cola admission ticket (retail $15).

Total retail value: $132.99 – Total Savings: $43.99.

Fans can also choose from an assortment of other ticket combination packages including:

- Triple Play Ticket Pack: Upper Box ticket to any Braves game plus admission to two of the other MVP attractions (Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, Stone Mountain Park, or Six Flags Over Georgia) starting at $45.
- Double Play Ticket Pack: Upper Box ticket to any Braves game plus admission to one other MVP attraction (Stone Mountain Park, World of Coca-Cola, or Six Flags Over Georgia) starting at $24.50.
- The Big Catch: Outfield Pavilion ticket to any Braves game plus admission to Georgia Aquarium for $36.

Visit braves.com/mvp for information or to purchase tickets.

BALLS & STRIKES

- Braves Hall of Famer **Dale Murphy** was at the Braves' Mar. 17 spring training game against the Mets at Disney's Champion Stadium and delivered Bobby Cox's lineup card to the umpires at home plate before the game. Murphy also joined new Braves radio announcer **Jim Powell** in the booth for spring training games Mar. 19 and 21.

- Former Braves outfielder **Brian Jordan** (1999-2001, '05-06), along with the Mason Murer Fine Art Museum, teamed for an evening of music and art entitled "A Musical Interlude" on Mar. 12. The event benefited the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

- The Gwinnett Braves and Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast (CSS) signed a four-year television partnership that includes the broadcast of a minimum of 25 games per year.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

WE CAN PLAY ALL SEASON AS GOOD AS WE STARTED

THERE ARE A LOT OF FACTORS that go into the decision of who to bring up to the major league level. It's always decided on a case-by-case basis, but this spring for example, we had Tommy Hanson and Jordan Schafer.

We needed a centerfielder like Schafer, with his skills. I don't believe it's rushing him to bring him up. But in Hanson's case, because of the schedule, we didn't need a fifth starter until April 18. Tom Glavine, who we projected to be our fifth starter, pitched almost perfect baseball all spring, and that allowed us to leave Hanson down in Triple A to get more work.

The more experience you get, the better off you're going to be. Hanson is a gifted ballplayer, but it doesn't hurt to have him down there. It would have been a waste to have him up here, not getting work. It's also good for the farm system, makes it stronger, to have guys like that playing down there.

Everyone has input on how that type of decision is made - the general manager, the manager and the coaches. In some cases, it's a really close call. The decision is not easy when it's close.

We were trying to decide all spring between Schafer, Gregor Blanco and Josh Anderson. It was a tough call, because they all played well. But in the end, Schafer won.

A lot of times, I don't like to make decisions in spring training because guys are there to get in shape. And some guys don't play or pitch well in the spring, but play extremely well in the season. You have to be careful and pay attention to the reports.

Spring training can be misleading both ways - the guy doing great and the guy not doing so well. You have to factor in a lot of stuff, and that's why we have so many eyes watching.

> "I THINK WE HAVE ONE OF THE BEST (BENCHES) IN THE NATIONAL LEAGUE."

Our starting rotation has looked great so far, exactly what we hoped for and needed. It was exciting to watch Kenshin Kawakami's first start in the United States, and I thought he was excellent. He walked a few guys but had eight strikeouts, and when you're striking guys out, you give yourself room.

He was outstanding and is a great addition to our team. He looked extremely confident and shows competitive spirit, and I like that.

We have the potential to have an outstanding bullpen once they work out a few kinks. It's going to take a little bit of time, simply because it's different after you've had arm operations. It doesn't all come back immediately. We've got three guys back there, Mike Gonzalez, Rafael Soriano, and Peter Moylan, who have all had arm surgery.

I think there's a "feeling your way back" situation in coming back from surgery. Adrenaline definitely factors in to how a guy throws, especially when he hasn't pitched in a year. But they're making adjustments, and we're going to see very good things from them.

There has been a lot of talk about our bench. I think we have one of the best in the National League. It's strong, offensively, but they're all good fielders, too.

Greg Norton worked hard to play first base and the outfield. Martin Prado and Omar Infante can play any position. Infante is a spare centerfielder, too. It's invaluable having guys with that type of versatility and ability to come in and hit. It gives me a lot of great options, not just in long games, but also as the season goes on.

It's going to be a matter of winning those series, taking two out of three, fighting back if the other team pulls ahead, steady pitching and timely hitting. We've already seen that in the early games, and I think we're capable of doing it all year.

PLAYING PEPPER

PETER MOYLAN

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Against the odds, Peter Moylan, who led all major league rookies with a 1.80 ERA and .208 batting average allowed in 2007, made the Opening Day roster, just 11 months after Tommy John surgery.

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHOPTALK: What did it feel like to really throw hard this year after having Tommy John surgery (elbow ligament replacement) last May 8?

PETER MOYLAN: It was good. My intensity was pretty consistent, but my velocity picked up as I've gotten stronger. I've consistently been throwing around 90 miles an hour, which is where I ought to be at this time of year. I gradually let it rip as the spring went on. It was interesting throwing in spring training games, but I didn't feel any differently from when I had thrown the various bullpen and side sessions. Right now, I'm glad that I've made the team, and I'm really proud that I've worked hard to get here. The real intensity of emotion (will come) during the first game of the season.

CT: When did you know, "Okay, I'm ready?"

MOYLAN: It was about two weeks before the start of the season. I told a reporter that I was sick of reading that, "The Braves are hopeful Moylan will be ready for Opening Day", because I had a goal to be ready for Opening Day, and I think they did, too, but they didn't push me. It wasn't until I was consistently throwing in games and the rest time between throwing went from seven days to five to three, two, and one. Now I'm throwing every other day.

CT: Can you describe your disappointment in 2008 after all the success you enjoyed in 2007?

MOYLAN: It was really rough. For about a week, I didn't want to think it was actually happening. I would think, "I'll just rehab and rehab, and it will be fine," and we actually did try to rehab for a few weeks (to avoid surgery). By the time we eventually sat down together and said, "Okay, you're going to get cut," I'd already dealt with it inside myself, so I was ready for it. But the first time I felt (the pain), I knew something was wrong.

CT: When did you know, "Uh, oh...something is wrong?"

MOYLAN: On the fifth pitch I threw in the outing against Washington (April 11, 2008). I threw a fastball to Christian Guzman and struck him out on it. I felt it and thought, "Something isn't right," but I thought I'd keep throwing and did that a bit. I ended up pitching to two more hitters and got out of the inning. When I was high-fiving guys after the game, I knew then. I was feeling pain on the inside of my elbow. When I got in the shower and tried to bend or straighten my arm, I couldn't do either. I was washing myself and just thinking... my mind was racing. I didn't want to tell the trainers. I'd just earned my first official save (of the season, second of his career). It was the first chance I had to close. I was pumped. I was so fired up, and the last thing I wanted to do was to walk in the training room and say, "My elbow is sore." I thought it might settle down over the course of the night. But the next day, I couldn't bend or straighten my arm, so I knew I had to say something. Straightaway they looked at me when I walked in, and I could tell by their reaction that something was seriously wrong.

CT: How did they know?

MOYLAN: I was in a suit because it was a travel day. We were supposed to go to Miami, and I walked in with my arm slightly bent. The training staff, being their usual happy selves said, "Hey! How are you doing?" I must have had a look on my face, because that died down and they knew straightaway something was wrong.

CT: Did you have a lot of pain at that point?

MOYLAN: Just sitting there, no, but as soon as I went to move it, or if I straightened it too much, my elbow would just grab. My ligament was fine, but I had a bone spur that was stuck in the ligament, and there was hope that it would move while we rehabbed it - but it didn't. The spur was lodged in there and wouldn't come out without cutting the ligament.

CT: Where did they take the replacement ligament?

MOYLAN: They took a piece from my hamstring, so I had two incision sites.

CT: Did you rely on other teammates who had gone through the same surgery as you?

MOYLAN: It was great having John Smoltz around and especially Mike Gonzalez, because he'd just gone through it the year before. Smoltz used to wear a t-shirt that read, "It's all about breaking protocols." It was great having those guys there, because any question I had, I could go to them. I can ask the training staff, but they're only going by what they'd been told by people who'd gone through it. Smoltz and Gonzalez had gone through it. So any time I had a question, it was great to ask, "Did you feel this at this point," and they'd answer, "Yeah, I did." Everything felt normal, and it was good to have them there to reassure me that things really were normal.

CT: It must have been encouraging to have Gonzalez there, because he'd come back successfully so quickly.

MOYLAN: Absolutely. As soon as he came back and I saw his first outing, he was

throwing 94, 95 miles per hour and was spotting the ball, and he looked like the same Mike Gonzalez. I thought, "Geez, this isn't so bad." There have been so many guys who have come back, especially these days. Back in the day, there was a 60 percent chance for a full recovery, and I swear now it's got to be at least 80 to 90 percent, because the surgical techniques have gotten better and there's so much information about how quickly to come back. The training staff has been really careful with me. They've asked me every day, every hour, "Are you okay? Are you sure?" It's basically up to me, and I'm not going to push anything to the point that I'll snap my ligament! I know that I feel good and that I can handle it, and if I can't, I shall let them know.

CT: Have there been any setbacks for you?

MOYLAN: To this point, touch wood (knocks on the locker frame), there's not been one. I was looking for it to be sore, to feel pain when I first started throwing, but they take it so slow. The first step is 15 throws at 20 feet, so you really ease your way into it. The first time you feel any pressure is about 120 feet, when you have to let it go to get it to the person you're playing catch with. And then when you get on the mound - that's the next step. I was waiting to feel something after that, but I didn't. I didn't push it. The first mound session was 15 pitches, and then eventually you get up to 75 pitches, and the step after that is getting on the mound out here (at spring training) against hitters to see how well you recover from that. I did that three times, and it felt good. Pitching in games was the next step.

CT: In terms of your comfort level, was it more a physical or mental concern when you started throwing? Were you nervous?

MOYLAN: Of course. Knowing how it felt when it hurt, knowing that it takes 12 months to heal... the last thing I wanted to do was jeopardize it in any way. But as I said, they don't let you get to that point. Even if you wanted to let it rip, they're standing right there watching you, and you really can't. Or if you do, they'll say, "Back it down a bit."

CT: What are your goals for the season?

> **"I WANT TO BE THE GUY WHO COMES BACK AND DOESN'T HAVE TO DO THIS AGAIN, BECAUSE IT'S AWFUL."**

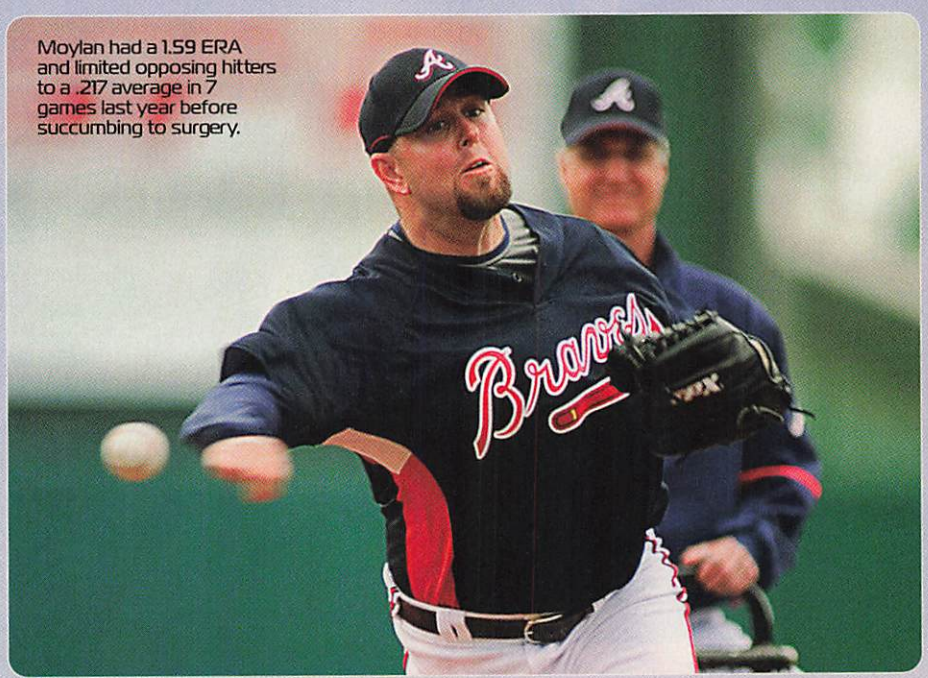
MOYLAN: The number one goal is to stay in the big leagues. I don't want to be the guy who comes back, and then a month later is back down again, and then has to come back again. I want to be the guy who comes back and doesn't have to do this again, because it's awful. I wouldn't wish this on anyone. That's the number one thing. Stay healthy... maybe get to the playoffs - that would be nice! I set this goal for myself a long time ago. I'm pumped and excited that it's come true. People have asked, "What did you do? Did you work harder?" I honestly don't think I've done anything different from anyone else. I just think my arm reacted better

CT: Can you describe your emotions about throwing again?

MOYLAN: It was pretty nerve-wracking, actually. It was great to get the first session out of the way and recover from it. But leading up to it, I was excited but nervous, as well. I didn't know how I'd react. But once I got the first one away, it's fine and your mind starts racing ahead, "Oh, I could be ready by this time." You play internal games with yourself and think you could come back earlier, but they shut it down within five minutes! It was a big deal.

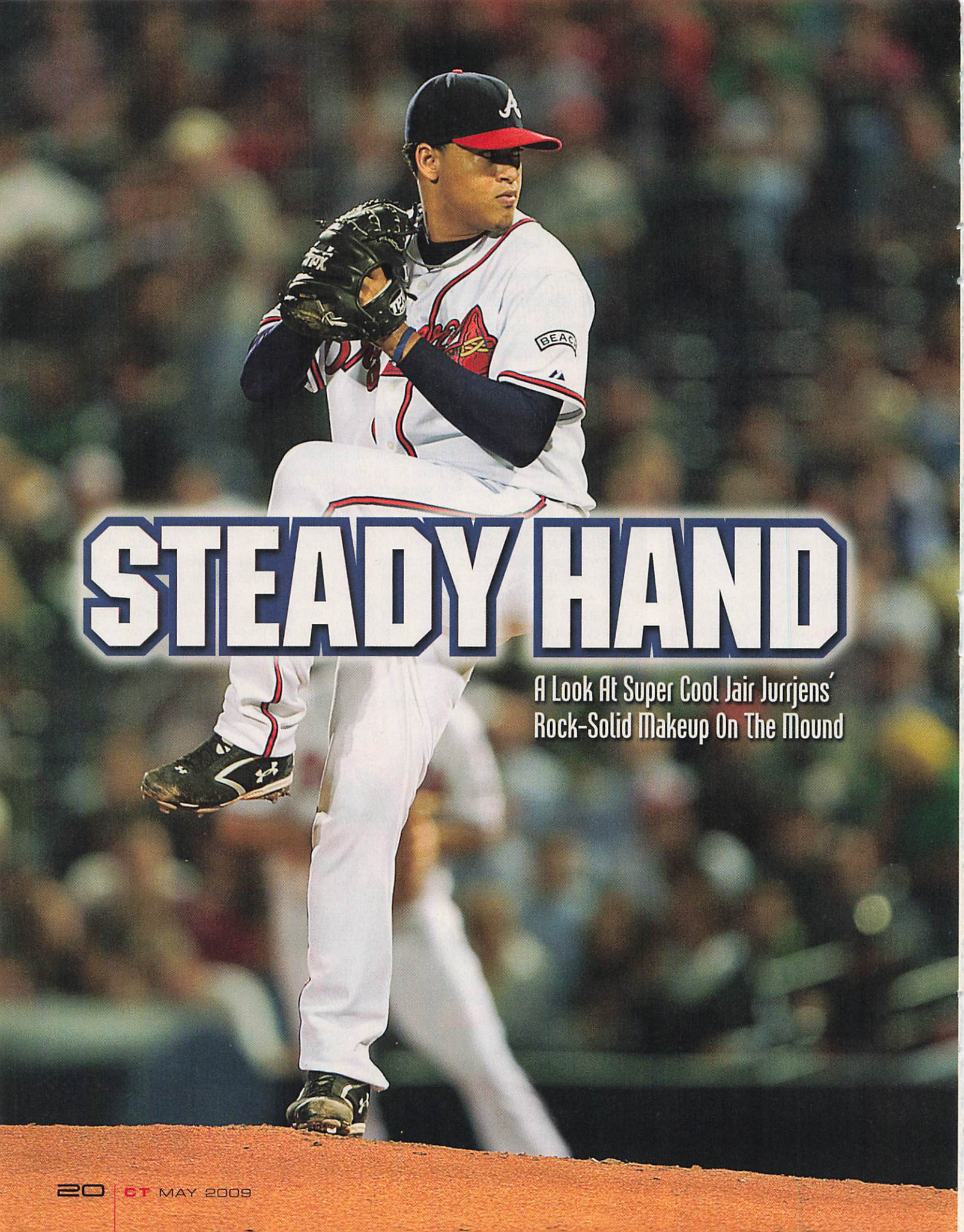
CT: What's the biggest thing you learned going through surgery and rehab... about yourself, about baseball?

MOYLAN: I guess I learned what I've always known and that's that I've got the kind of character that, as corny as it sounds, if you're given lemons, make lemonade. I've got that type of attitude. I don't let things get me down, no matter how big or small they may seem. I always try to see the light, or to make light of it. I enjoy being around people, and I enjoy challenges. This was one of the biggest challenges I've ever had to go through, and I'm not there yet. But I've come out the other end, and it's okay. You can go two ways: You can go work your butt off, or you can feel sorry for yourself. From the day I could work, I worked really hard. I'd had a taste of (the majors), and I wanted to be there again.



Moylan had a 1.59 ERA and limited opposing hitters to a .217 average in 7 games last year before succumbing to surgery.

ALLISON SHERRETTS



STEADY HAND

A Look At Super Cool Jair Jurrjens' Rock-Solid Makeup On The Mound

BY JON COOPER

WHEN YOU COME FROM AN ISLAND where the average temperature is 87.1 degrees, you learn how to handle the heat.

Curacao native Jair Jurrjens has certainly shown he can do that.

The 23-year-old righthander proved his rock solid makeup again in his first start of the season, April 7 at Philadelphia. In spite of chilly weather and a typically hostile Citizens Bank Park crowd, he bent but didn't break in the first two innings (46 pitches, including a 24-pitch second inning during which he walked opposing pitcher Jamie Moyer). Not only did he escape unscathed from two shaky innings, but he settled down to work a scoreless 5 2/3 innings (4 hits), earning credit for the Braves' 4-0 victory in the second game of the season.

Not bad for a sophomore major leaguer, but that's what the Braves and their fans have come to expect from J.J.

Consider what he's gone through since making his major league debut for the Detroit Tigers on Aug. 15, 2007.

In his first 75 days as a pro, Jurrjens, then 21, made his first start at Cleveland in the heat of a pennant race (a loss, but he lasted seven innings and threw 62 of 104 pitches for strikes), endured his first injury (shoulder inflammation on Aug. 26, that sidelined him for two weeks), and experienced his first trade (Oct. 29 to the Braves, with outfield prospect Gorkys Hernandez, for Edgar Renteria).

He responded by pitching his way onto the Braves' staff and into the starting rotation last spring. Then as the stakes grew higher, so did Jurrjens' performance.

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Last April, in order, Jurrjens:

- Broke the Braves' season-opening, two-game losing streak, working 5 1/3 innings in a win against Pittsburgh.
- Worked seven strong innings at always-tough Coors Field.
- Hung an 0-fer on Hanley Ramirez in six strong innings (two runs, four hits) despite a loss to Florida.
- Dominated the Dodgers over seven innings (one run, three hits) and struck out countryman Andruw Jones three times in the win.
- Fought through a bout with control issues at hostile Shea Stadium, retiring the last 10 batters in a six-inning effort that beat the Mets.
- Worked seven innings of 1-run, 2-hit, ball in a no-decision at Washington.

The tone set, Jurrjens became the rock on an injury-riddled pitching staff, leading the Braves in starts (31) wins (13), innings (188 1/3 - 45 2/3 more than he'd thrown in any season at any level), and strikeouts (139). In June, he was the first Brave to win National League Rookie of the Month, going 3-0, with a 1.63 ERA, and according to Elias, his three straight starts without allowing an earned run, made him only the second rookie in franchise history to go back-to-back starts without allowing an earned run - the first since Dana Fillingim, in 1918!

"J.J. had tremendous confidence last year," said pitching coach Roger McDowell. "Going into last year, he didn't know the hitters, he didn't know anything other that what his strengths were. That was the terrific thing about J.J. last year. He pitched to his strengths, and he kept very humble. That translated into a very successful season. His work ethic has not changed. He's the same guy as he was last year."

About the only difference is that this year he knows he has a job. Thus his confidence level is off the charts - not that his almost Clark Kent-like demeanor is a tip-off.

"There's a little less pressure. I'm not trying to impress anybody," he said in a voice that barely registered above a whisper. "Last year, I needed to impress people to get a job. This year, I have the rotation

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made, so I can relax a little bit and work on my pitches."

It's that kind of quiet confidence that makes him a perfect fit in the mold of Atlanta Braves pitchers, who - fiery John Smoltz notwithstanding - have always combined laser-like focus with emotional cool - see Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux, Kevin Millwood, Tim Hudson.

It's also impressed his Braves teammates.

"He was a very confident kid last year, and I think his presence was something that stood out right away, that everybody around here was impressed by," said Glavine. "He carried himself in a way that you knew he had a good idea what he was trying to do, what he wanted to go out there and do.

"He still has that air of uncertainty that we all have until we prove something to ourselves," Glavine continued. "I think maybe this year that little air of uncertainty is gone a little bit. That's not to say that it doesn't exist, because we all have it from year to year, but I think he's just a little bit more confident in himself and what he brings to the table. Then that desire to just continue to get better, all of that is a little bit stronger this year."

"You can tell he understands himself as a pitcher a little better this year, what his strengths are," added Hudson. "He's still featuring the same good stuff that he featured last year. I think right now he's trying to go out and refine it and just improve on the tools that he already has."

The desire to improve on his repertoire

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IT'S TIME FOR SOME OF US YOUNGER GUYS TO LEAD

THIS BRAVES CLUBHOUSE is the best clubhouse I've ever been in. Everybody seems to get along. They're loose, and they're ready to turn it up a notch and get back to where this organization was at one point and where it needs to be going to the future.

I don't regret the time I spent away from spring training, but if there was a season that I wished the WBC was the next year, this would be it. Still, the guys that I hadn't caught a lot - Derek Lowe, Kenshin Kawakami and Javier Vazquez - I faced enough and I'd seen them enough that I knew how they pitched. I wasn't worried about catching them during the season.

I have pretty high expectations for our team, and the first step is to compete for a division title and get back to the playoffs. All the young guys on our team have been here long enough to know what we need to do. It's time for us to perform. We can't wait for Chipper to hit a home run or have a pitcher throw a shutout.

People are relying on us guys who have been here for three or four years to lead the way, not just fill in the gaps. I feel like I'm one of the leaders on the team, but I also feel like there are a lot of them.

What (leadership) means to me is that I can help some of the young guys. Chipper's great for all of us. Anyone who has a question can go to him, but there are about five of us who have been here a while who know it's time for us to play a part in the leadership.

> "AS FAR AS HITTING CLEANUP, I JUST HOPE THAT WHEN THEY WALK CHIPPER, I CAN COME THROUGH!"

We have a couple of great leaders in Tom Glavine and Chipper. It's a great thing for this team and organization for Glavine to come back and play another year, possibly finish his career here, and on a positive note.

I was so glad to see the Braves sign Chipper to an extension so that he could finish his career here. It's something that not many people have been able to do. It's pretty amazing what he's done.

People don't understand how unselfish he's been. He's given up a lot to stay here and done a lot over his career to get better players here. He's a team guy and the leader in this clubhouse. The things he has done have not gone unnoticed by the other players.

I feel like I'm about to hit my prime in a year or two, and I'm getting better as I learn and understand the game more.

As far as hitting cleanup, I just hope that when they walk Chipper, I can come through! I think if we're in a game that's on the line, they're going to want to face me instead of Chipper, and I'm fine with that. I feel 100 percent confident that I can come through in the clutch and get the big hit for this team.

The key to consistency for me is to try to make my swing repetitive, game after game. And I try to remember when things are going good how to get back to that. I'm lucky, because I have a dad and brother who understand the game and watch every at-bat I have, and they know how to help me. If I have a couple of games where I'm not feeling too great, my dad or brother are on the phone to tell me what I'm doing wrong, and I can take that to the field, to the cages, and into the game.

As far as our division, I know it's not going to be like last year when the Phillies beat us every single game (4-14). We're going to compete. We have every piece in place to have a successful season. It's on us. Frank Wren did an unbelievable job bringing the right players in here.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

convinced Jurrjens to pass on the World Baseball Classic. He has no regrets about missing the remarkable first-round run by the Netherlands entry. He stayed in close touch with that team, but more importantly, Jurrjens got in closer touch with himself and what he needed to do to continue to be successful in the majors.

At the top of that list was sharpening his repertoire, which features a fastball, changeup and sinker, and he also tinkers with a slider. McDowell liked Jurrjens' approach during the spring.

"His fastball and his changeup are his bread and butter. His slider is the pitch that we've been working on ever since he came into spring training last year," said McDowell. "Getting to know him better and getting an idea of his delivery has helped both of us figure some things out in what makes a good slider, what makes a good breaking ball, and it gives us another weapon."

"I still need to fix it a little more," said Jurrjens. "There's a lot of room to improve the slider. I'll try to keep improving it."

One area he won't have to improve is his rapport with his teammates and coaches in the clubhouse.

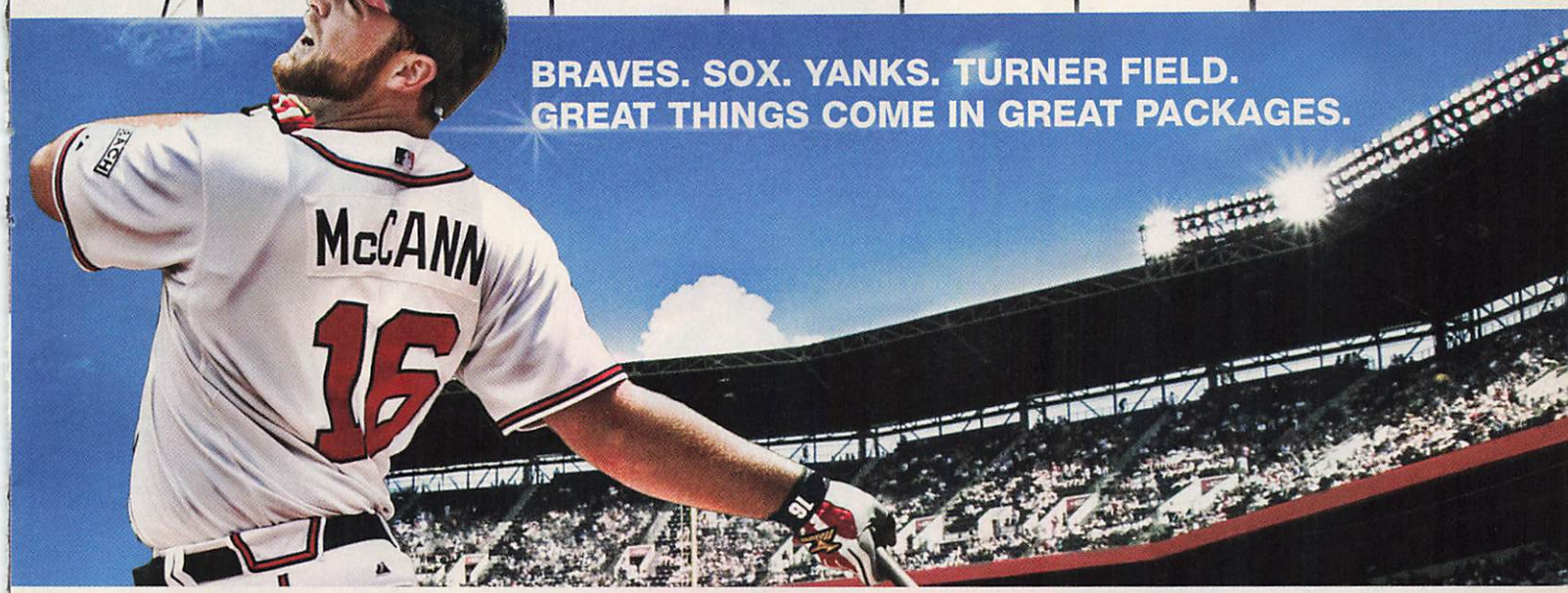
"He's a nice kid," said Hudson. "He's always been really social about everybody on the team. He's never been bashful in the clubhouse, but he's always shown respect to the older players."

"He enjoys the game, and he works hard. That's all you can ask from a young kid," added Glavine. "A lot of them come up here, and they enjoy the game a little bit too much. They forget the work aspect of it. But he's got a nice balance of coming in here and enjoying what he's doing and being around the guys - but at the same time, knowing, 'Alright, I've got work to do.' When it's time to do his work, he's pretty focused, which, if he continues to do that, will serve him well and help him have a great career."

For now, Jurrjens is focused on being a contributor to the 2009 rotation that features veterans Derek Lowe and Javier Vazquez and Japanese League star Kenshin Kawakami, as well as Glavine. He'll continue to set the bar high personally, with the only tangible number openly discussed being 200 innings of work. That's his primary goal and something he missed in 2008 by 11 2/3 innings.

"I want to reach 200 innings this year," said Jurrjens. "I have a lot of personal goals, but a lot of team goals, too. I'm trying to put those two together and try to have a good season again this year."

THE THRILL OF TURNER FIELD



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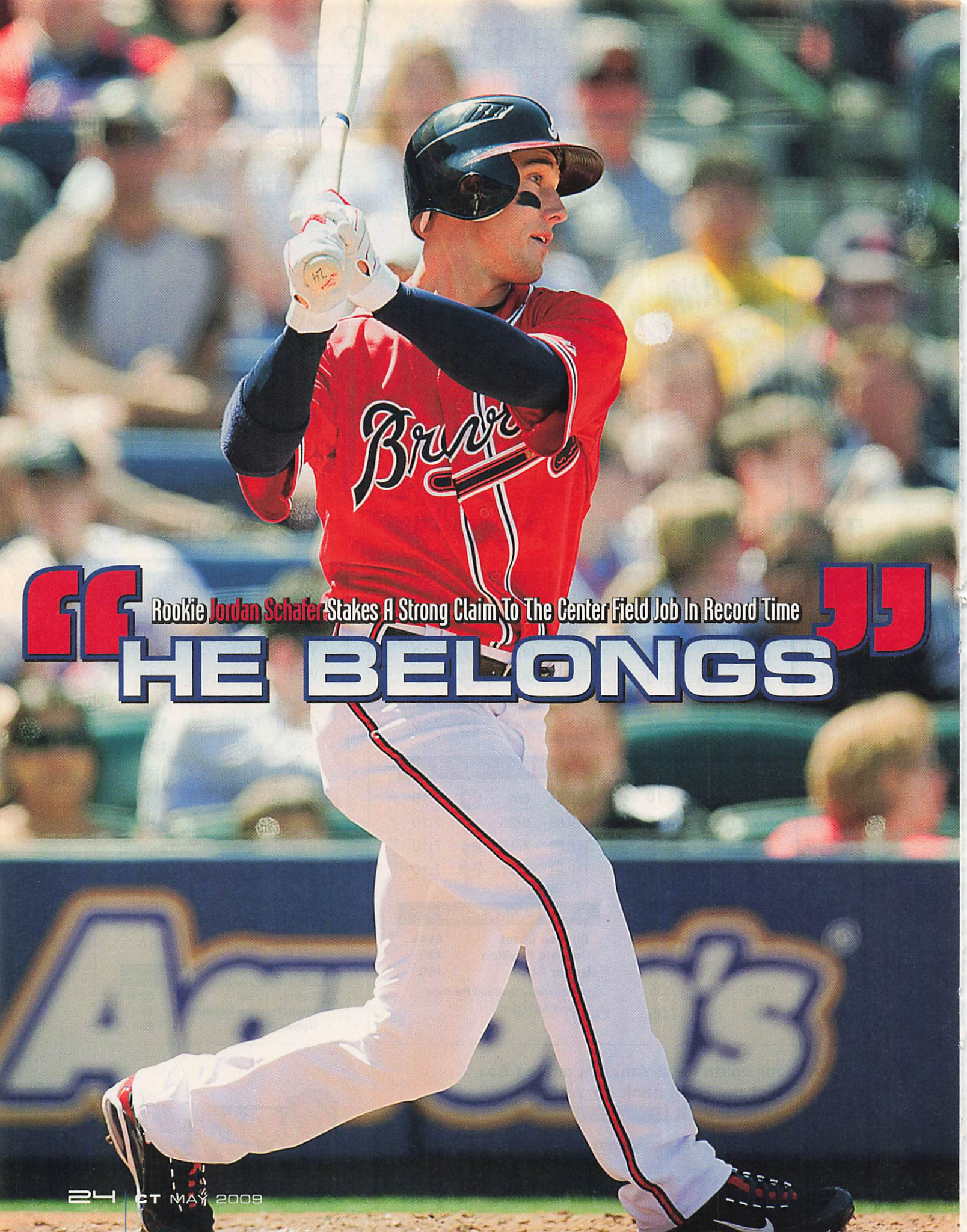
Braves



Rookie Jordan Schafer Stakes A Strong Claim To The Center Field Job In Record Time

"HE BELONGS"

BY RAY GLIER

JORDAN SCHAFER IS NOT GIVING HIMSELF TIME TO savor anything. At some point, a conditioning workout, or a session with the batting tee, or a Sunday batting practice will be an option, and he will take stock of how quickly and how far he has come in three months. The first week of the season, however, is not the time to savor. It is time to push. It might stay that way for a while, too.

Schafer showed up for spring training with a voracious appetite on Feb. 10 when he appeared in the batting cages at Disney's Wide World of Sports five days before even the pitchers and catchers were due to report. The Braves have not been able to get rid of him since then. Schafer made every spring training road trip, and even when he hurt his shoulder a week into the exhibition schedule, he was in the clubhouse from the time the door was unlocked.

A member of the Braves front office was working out one night after a game at Disney when Schafer arrived to work out - for the third time that day. He practiced in the morning, played a game in the afternoon, and returned to lift some weights in the evening.

His quest continued at Turner Field following the home opener April 10 when he left the ballpark at nearly 2 a.m. due to the long rain delay, only to return at 1 p.m. the next day to prepare for a 7:10 first pitch that night. So far, Schafer's regimen is to hit off the tee at 3 p.m., and then take regular batting practice at 5.

When Bobby Cox declared there would be "optional batting practice" on Easter Sunday, who was the first person out of the clubhouse door and headed to the field with a bat over shoulder?

Schafer. He was hitting in the third group of four, but he still had to be early.

"They were going to make him start the season at Triple-A," said Jeff Francoeur. "They wanted him at Triple-A, I believe that, and he just changed their minds. He forced himself on them. When he got in the cage with me and Chipper and McCann on February 10, we were like, 'This kid is serious. He wants the starting job.'

"Now look at him. Look at what he's doing. He just took the job, and he's running with it."

After four seasons in the Braves' farm system, the 22-year old Schafer appears entrenched as the starting centerfielder after only one week of his rookie season. It seems a little much to call a rookie "entrenched," but it sure seems like he's dug in, planted roots, and owns the position that's been up for grabs since Andruw Jones left following the 2007 season.

In the first week, Schafer hit .348 in the No. 8 spot in the order - meaning he had no "protection" since the pitcher batted behind him. He clobbered a home run in his first at-bat as a big leaguer, and homered again in his third game against the World Champion Phillies. He also dashed around center field like the phenom who preceded him at that spot - Andruw.

Schafer has a simple explanation for the dutiful measures he is taking with his new job.

"I'm just trying to prove to people who put trust in me that I belong here," he said.

No one, including Schafer, was quite sure he belonged with the Braves when spring training started. He knew the score.

ATLANTA BRAVES

ALLISON SHIRRELLS

FIRST IMPRESSION

WHEN JORDAN SCHAFER hit a home run in his first major league at-bat at Philadelphia April 5, he became the 99th player in major league history - dating to 1876 - to do so. The last player to accomplish the feat was Houston's Mark Saccomanno on Sept. 8, 2008.

Schafer was the fifth Brave to homer in his first at-bat and the first since Jermaine Dye in 1996. The only other three Braves ever to have such a debut were Joe Harrington in 1895, Johnny Bates in 1906, and Chuck Tanner in 1955. Tanner's was particularly unique, because he did it as a pinch-hitter and hit the first pitch he saw.

Schafer also became the first Braves player since leftfielder Rufino Linares in 1981 to make his major league debut on Opening Day as a starter.

Josh Anderson, a superb athlete, was the front-runner for the center field job and Gregor Blanco, who played 144 games with the Braves in 2008, was also a candidate.

"I didn't know if I had a shot at making the team or not," Schafer admitted. "I knew it was going to be really difficult, because Josh was out of options and Blanco was here all year and I missed at-bats last season. That put me in a hole to start with."

Schafer, who was a third-round pick in 2005, climbed out of the hole in a hurry. Everyone else assumed it would be okay for him to get more seasoning in the minors. But not Schafer. He bore down on the job and counted on the Braves' brass to keep their eyes open to the possibility he was their guy all along. They did.

"We came in open-minded to just see what would happen," said Frank Wren. "We felt like we realistically had three good candidates, all that could compete for the job. We all felt that Josh had the leg up on everyone else, but not that it was a done deal by any means."

Four games into spring training, Schafer appeared to fall behind, maybe even fall out of contention. He sprained his shoulder diving for a ball and was out 10 days.

"At that time, I wasn't even concerned about making the team. I just wanted to get healthy and get ready," Schafer said. "When I came back, I didn't miss a beat."

The day he returned, Schafer had two hits in a victory over the Phillies, and the race for the center field job was on again. He finished the spring hitting .324 in 21 games, stole five bases and handled himself well in center field. Anderson was subsequently traded to Detroit, Blanco was assigned to Triple-A Gwinnett, and the Braves had a new centerfielder.

"I had to show them I could handle it on the field, but also handle it from a mental standpoint and playing in the everyday grind," Schafer said. "They needed to see I'm not going to get two hits every game, that I am going to go 0-fer and just handle it both ways, mentally and physically."

Schafer managed his first week in the majors well, considering the conditions. His first night in the big leagues, the wind swirled around him in Philly with the baseball acting like a hot dog wrapper in the eddies of center field. The next night, the wind blew straight through him and left his hands numb, yet he still played well.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BY KEN ROSENTHAL

PEDRO'S AVAILABILITY BEGINNING TO APPEAL

PEDRO MARTINEZ might not get his $5 million asking price, but just one week into the season, teams already were scrambling for starting pitching. The Indians, Dodgers and Brewers all had immediate needs. Martinez's old team, the Mets, also has rotation issues.

Frank Thomas, **Jim Edmonds** and **Frank Catalanotto** were among the veteran hitters looking for work. Catalanotto, owed $6 million by the Rangers, would be a perfect fit for a National League team in need of a left-handed bat, but the early interest in him was minimal. His options included signing a minor-league contract, playing in an independent league, or perhaps spending one year in Japan.

Former Brave **Gary Sheffield** did not figure to last long with the Mets. Rightfielder **Ryan Church**, the player whose job Sheffield was supposed to threaten, got off to a hot start. The Mets were not scheduled to face many left-handed starters in April, and Sheffield's inability to play the outfield was an issue, especially at the Mets' spacious new park, Citi Field.

Red Sox righthander **John Smoltz** said in early April that he knew he was close to getting ready. Why? Because he was getting upset at himself in bullpen sessions, forcing himself to make adjustments. Smoltz, coming off shoulder surgery, remains on track to join the Red Sox's rotation in June.

Roy Oswalt made three high-intensity starts in the World Baseball Classic, but Astros general manager **Ed Wade** said that he did not expect his ace to require a breather later this summer. Wade said that Oswalt always is in attack mode, even in his Grapefruit League starts. And while the pitcher weighs only 170 pounds, he spent the off-season getting himself ready for the WBC. However, he had a 6.23 ERA after his first two starts.

The Phillies' batting order could be a season-long work in progress. Manager **Charlie Manuel** said he was comfortable having three straight left-handed hitters – **Chase Utley**, **Ryan Howard** and **Raul Ibanez** – against certain right-handed starters. The combination leaves the Phillies vulnerable to lefty relievers such as the Braves' **Mike Gonzalez**, but Utley and Ibanez hit lefties well, and Manuel likes the idea of getting an early lead.

Colby Rasmus opened the season as Cardinals outfielder "3A", a viable alternative to **Ryan Ludwick**, **Rick Ankiel** or **Chris Duncan** on any given day. The Cardinals' plan was to use Rasmus four to five times a week. If, after three or four weeks, he was not getting enough at-bats, they could always return him to Triple-A. Duncan also can move to first base on the rare days that **Albert Pujols** rests, creating an extra spot in the outfield.

The Astros finished spring training by winning 11 of their last 15 games after a 1-16-3 start. One executive said he was "totally shocked" by the improvement in righthander **Russ Ortiz**, who looked the way he did in his best years with the Giants (18-9 in 1999) and Braves (21-7 in 2003), giving every indication that he could be a quality No. 4 starter.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Then there was the matter of the third deck of Citizens Bank Park. This was new. The flyballs were not going to come at him on a nice arc in the sky, but with a crowd of shirts and bright advertising banners in the background to make things risky. They didn't have three decks of seats in the minors.

He also hurt his wrist the first week of the season. He wasn't even sure how he did it, nor did he seem to care. Schafer shrugged and dealt with it.

His first week in the big leagues was the counter-narrative to everything fans might have expected.

His major league unveiling in Philly did not produce a wisp of a hitter, a kid so light the stiff wind in Citizens Bank ballpark was supposed to pin him against the outfield wall. It produced a masher who pounded a 3-1 fastball from Brett Myers over the wall just to the left of dead center field, the deepest part of the park.

After going 0-for-3 with a walk in the second game of the season, Schafer hit another home run in the fifth inning of the third game - in just the 11th at-bat of his career. In his fifth game, the second at Turner Field, he lashed three hits, including two doubles against the Nationals.

Schafer, listed at 6-feet-1, 200 pounds, looks slightly built, but his core is muscled due to relentless training.

"I think he could potentially hit in a lot of different spots," Wren said. "He is not limited to the top or the bottom of the order. There are other spots he can hit, because he can drive a ball, and I think he is going to get physically stronger as he matures."

When the bat finally cooled after the first five games of the regular season, Schafer showed why he is really in Atlanta and not Gwinnett. He struck out three times in an 8-5 victory over the Nationals on Easter Sunday, but he made up for it with sparkling plays - dashing into the right-center gap to take away a double from Elijah Dukes in the eighth, then racing to the wall to rob Josh Willingham of extra bases in the ninth.

"Just because you have a blank day at the plate doesn't mean you don't find other ways to contribute," Schafer said.

Schafer wants his teammates, the entire organization, to trust him. He knows what is at stake after being suspended for 50 games in 2008 for violating the league's policy on banned substance.

"He wants so bad to belong and show people he is the centerfielder," Francoeur said. "I have seen enough already. He belongs."

WILL LINEUP'S LEFTY SLANT MATTER?

BY STEVE FALL

THE BRAVES had more plate appearances against left-handed pitchers (2,004) than any other National League team last season. This was no coincidence. Since the team hit considerably better when facing righthanders than lefties, opposing managers looked to exploit this weakness. This year, with a regular lineup loaded with left-handed hitters, the team could face even more southpaws. Is the team's lack of lineup balance cause for concern?

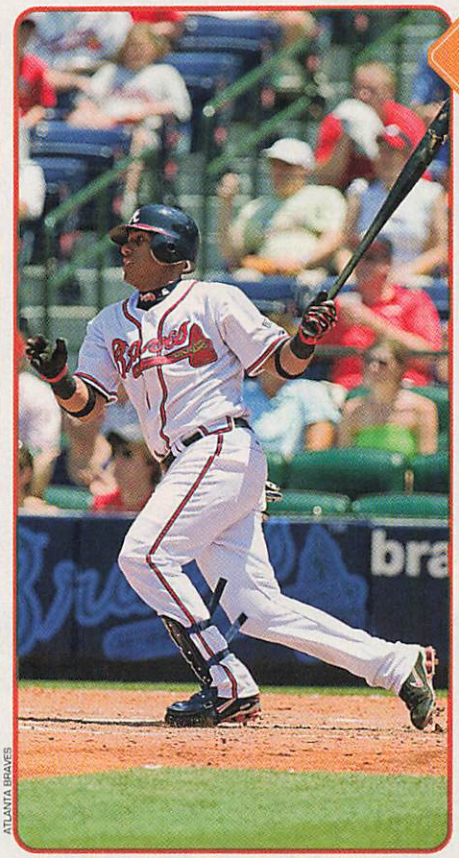
Jeff Francoeur, Yunel Escobar and switch-hitting Chipper Jones enter the season as the only right-handed hitters in Atlanta's projected regular lineup, though Matt Diaz might play left field when the opposing pitcher is a lefty. Bobby Cox can also sub Martin Prado for either Casey Kotchman at first or Kelly Johnson at second to add another right-handed bat. Nonetheless, Brian McCann, Kotchman, rookie Jordan Schafer and Johnson appear likely to play against most lefties.

Although the Braves had a .264 batting average (eighth in the NL) and .335 on-base percentage (10th) against southpaws last year, they showed little power. They hit just 31 home runs versus lefties, which tied the Giants for the league's lowest figure. They also finished 14th in slugging percentage (.381) against lefties.

While Diaz is a force against lefties, Cox opened the season with Schafer, a left-handed hitter, in center field. Schafer enters his rookie year with no major league track record against any type of pitcher.

The Braves' most likely lineup versus lefties is an outfield of Anderson or Diaz in left, Schafer and Francoeur, and an infield of Jones, Escobar, Johnson and Kotchman with McCann catching. That group batted .300 against lefties in 2008 with an excellent .359 on-base percentage and .425 slugging percentage. Power remains a concern, since they hit only 21 homers in 1,008 at-bats.

Those same players combined for strong career numbers against lefties (.304 BA, .372 OBP, .479 SLG, 36 home runs per 1,000 at-bats). So, despite having few right-handed batters, only the club's centerfielder appears potentially vulnerable to lefty pitchers, and then only because he's an unknown factor due to his lack of experience.



ATLANTA BRAVES

Yunel Escobar is one of just three right-handed hitters (along with Jeff Francoeur and switch-hitter Chipper Jones) in the everyday lineup.

And keep in mind that even if Cox opts not to platoon in left, Garret Anderson has hit just as effectively against lefties (.291) as he has versus righties (.299) in his career.

Should they encounter problems in this area, the Braves have two things going in their favor. First, it's much better to struggle versus lefthanders than righties, simply because there are fewer of them. Last season, 477 right-handed pitchers faced at least one big league hitter compared to 174 lefthanders. Even though they displayed this weakness in 2008, Atlanta still confronted righties in 69 percent of its plate appearances.

Furthermore, the Tampa Bay Rays experienced this same problem last season. Despite their shortcomings against southpaws, they reached the World Series.

In a sport filled with numbers, some statistics deserve more attention than they receive. Both stolen base percentage and on-base plus slugging percentage allowed measure success in key areas.

Research shows that each stolen base leads to approximately .19 runs scored. While stolen bases help manufacturer runs and ignite rallies, they come at a risk. Players thrown out stealing cost their team an estimated .46 runs on average. While they vary by specific situations, these numbers reveal the value of both players and teams posting a high stolen base percentage.

Last year, the Braves stole 58 bases in 85 attempts for a 68.2 percentage. That figure put them 13th in the NL. While they haven't stolen often or at a high success rate in recent years, Bobby Cox's clubs have excelled previously in this area. The 2003 Braves led the league with a 75.6 stolen base percentage (68 steals in 90 attempts). That marked the highest percentage in club history. The team also had strong success in 2004 (72.9 percent) and 2005 (74.2).

Rafael Furcal's 78.1 career stolen base percentage tops all Atlanta Braves players with at least 50 steals. Hank Aaron ranks second (77.8), showing his amazing all-around skills. Chipper Jones (76.2) – who ran more in his younger days – Otis Nixon (75.9) and Deion Sanders (74.3) round out the top five.

On-base plus slugging allowed, or OPS allowed, measures how much offense a pitcher surrenders. It makes a good complement to ERA, especially for relievers. ERA may get skewed higher or lower for relievers who inherit baserunners from the previous pitcher or leave them on base for the next reliever.

Blaine Boyer is a good example. His 5.88 ERA far exceeded the NL average of 4.29 last season. However, his .774 OPS allowed was just 24 percentage points above the league average (.750). The OPS allowed figure shows that Boyer pitched better than his ERA indicates.

Few pitchers can match Rafael Soriano in this category. He enters 2009 with a .612 career OPS allowed. That ranks eighth among active pitchers with at least 250 innings. Greg Maddux led all pitchers in Atlanta Braves history with a .608 career OPS.

THE LIEUTENANTS

BOBBY COX'S COACHING STAFF RECEIVES LITTLE RECOGNITION BUT IS CRITICAL TO THE TEAM

BY JON COOPER

NO OTHER TEAM IN BASEBALL has won more games since 1991 than the Braves, who had 1,666 notches on their belt entering this season. A lot of people rightfully share in the credit for that, from the front office to Bobby Cox and the players to the scouts and the farm system. Perhaps the least recognized contributors are the major league coaches.

Cox, however, is always quick with praise and generous in sharing the credit with his coaching staff, which currently consists of bench coach Chino Cadahia, first base coach Glenn Hubbard, pitching coach Roger McDowell, hitting coach Terry Pendleton, bullpen coach Eddie Perez and third base coach Brian Snitker. The group combines for 161 years of professional baseball playing and coaching experience.

"I wouldn't trade them for anything," said Cox. "They're hard workers, they know the game, they keep the players upbeat, and they can teach. You can't ask for any more than that."

Here's a look at these relatively unsung men who spend most of their time working behind the scenes.

ALLISON SHERRETTS

TONY PARGOLO / GETTY IMAGES

ALLISON SHERRETTS

CHINO CADAHIA

The 51-year-old native of Havana, Cuba, (he resides just south of Turner Field in Peachtree City with his wife and daughter), is in his 14th year with the Braves, and his third as Cox's right-hand man as bench coach. After spending 12 years as a manager in the Texas Rangers' minor league system, Cadahia joined the Braves as a roving catching instructor in 1996 and was named minor league field coordinator in 1997.

Cadahia does a lot of behind-the-scenes work prior to the game, like writing out and making copies of the lineup cards for Cox, the umpires and the opponent, and during the game, he is a key strategic confidant.

"Situations may come up in the game where Bobby will say, 'Have so-and-so ready to pinch-run or pinch-hit, and I do that in the dugout," said Cadahia.

"Chino's just a tremendous, baseball-knowledgeable guy," said Cox. "I'll make mistakes if I don't have Chino. He keeps me out of trouble."

DID YOU KNOW? Cadahia was the pitcher for Home Run Derby champion Sammy Sosa at the 2000 All-Star Game at Turner Field.

GLENN HUBBARD

A Braves lifer, Hubbard played 10 of his 12 major league seasons at second base in Atlanta (1978-87), which selected him on the 20th round of the 1975 draft. His blue-collar approach and relentless work ethic made him a fan-favorite, and he earned a berth on the National League All-Star team in 1983.

After nine years as a minor league coach, Hubbard joined the Atlanta staff in 1999 and has not only served as first base coach, but also has molded prospects Marcus Giles and Kelly Johnson into polished second basemen. Giles was an NL All-Star in 2003. As sure-handed as they came, Hubbard set a then-franchise record with a .991 fielding percentage in 1981 and was a career .983 fielder.

"He's an excellent infield instructor, said Cox. "He knows what he's talking about. They trust him, they believe in him."

Hubbard, 51, also is a key strategist during the game in a very subtle way.

"He's excellent stealing signs from the opposition, stuff like that," said Cox.

DID YOU KNOW? Hubbard was as fundamentally sound at the plate as he was in the field, leading the National League in sacrifice hits in 1982, with 20.

ROGER McDOWELL

The only member of the staff brought in from outside of the organization, McDowell has made himself at home in Atlanta since being hired prior to the 2006 season (from the Dodgers' farm system), following the departure of long-time pitching coach Leo Mazzone.

"Roger's one of the best pitching coaches in baseball," said Cox. "He's able to teach all mechanics, and he's a very bright guy."

In 12 big league seasons, McDowell pitched for the Mets, where he was winning pitcher in Game 7 of the 1986 World Series, as well as Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Texas and Baltimore, recording a lifetime record of 70-70, with 159 saves and a 3.30 ERA. Coaching was his next logical step.

"I have great passion for the game. I felt it was something that I could hopefully be good at," he said, adding with a laugh, "that remains to be determined."

McDowell's 2007 Braves were third in the National League in ERA and last season were second in the NL at the All-Star break (3.69) until massive injuries finally took their toll on the staff.

A notorious prankster as a player, McDowell, 48, recognizes the importance of allowing his pupils a little latitude when they're not working.

"One of the things I learned specifically from [then-Mets manager] Davey Johnson is that there is a time and a place for every-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

thing," he said. "Different guys have different personalities. Part of my job is to figure out what that personality is and how to get the best out of them."

DID YOU KNOW? McDowell was the infamous "second spitter" in an episode of the sitcom "Seinfeld" but also is a member of the Bowling Green State University (Ohio) Athletic Hall of Fame. He pitched there from 1980 through 1982.

TERRY PENDLETON

The NL MVP and batting champ for the Braves in the scintillating Worst-to-First 1991 season, Pendleton needed some prompting before finally agreeing to come back as hitting coach in November 2001.

"[Then-GM] John Schuerholz called me two or three times and told me how much

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

he thought I should take the hitting coach job," recalled Pendleton, who played 15 years in the majors, including 1991-94 and '96 in Atlanta. "I finally I decided, 'Let's give it a shot and see how things work.'"

The results have been quite good.

Under Pendleton, 48, the Braves have had the two best home run seasons in franchise history (235 in 2003 and 222 in 2006), they have hit at least 300 doubles in six straight seasons - something the franchise had done just once prior to his hiring - and the 2005 Braves became the first team to reach the post-season with at least six rookies having at least 100 at-bats.

Individually, Andruw Jones hit a single-season franchise-record 51 home runs in 2005, and last year Chipper Jones became the first Brave to win a batting title since Pendleton in '91.

"Pendleton's as good as it comes," said Cox. "He's dedicated, a hard worker and can teach hitting."

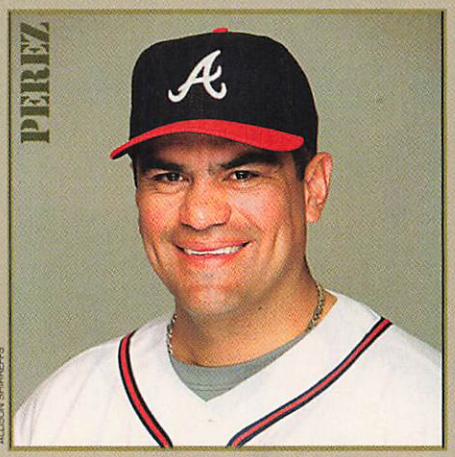
"I have to understand [players] all have different ideas, and they all have different ways of trying to get things accomplished," he said. "For me, it's getting the most out of them and not trying to get them to do what I did. Do what they can do and be better at what they do."

DID YOU KNOW? T.P. still holds the Braves' franchise season record for hits by a third baseman, getting a career-best 199 in 1992. That year he also led the National League with a .387 average with runners in scoring position.

EDDIE PEREZ

Cox rewarded another of the franchise's most popular players by hiring Eddie Perez prior to the 2007 season.

"Eddie is just a dynamite guy," said Cox.



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

"He knows how to pitch hitters. That's important when you're working with the bullpen guys. He keeps them alert. He's a lot of fun to be around."

A clutch hitter and a superb handler of pitchers, he made the role of "designated catcher" cool while with Atlanta from 1995 through 2001, then again in 2004 and 2005. Perez, 41, helps plan pitching strategy as well as catching side sessions in the 'pen. He finds the off-beat world of the bullpen his ideal environment.

"I tell the guys to just have fun, because it's a long season," said Perez, who made his initial foray into coaching in 2006 while rehabbing his shoulder at Double-A Mississippi, where he was an assistant under former teammate Jeff Blauser. "I want to keep everybody together as a family, because it's very important for the bullpen to know what to do when they go out there. We watch the game on TV, we talk about how we're going to pitch to guys, but we have fun, too."

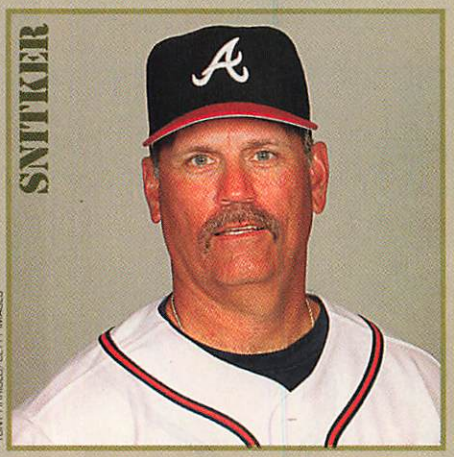
DID YOU KNOW? Although only a career .251 hitter, Perez was the MVP of the 1999 NLCS, when he hit .500 (10-for-20) against the Mets, and his .464 career average (13-for-28) is the highest ever for a catcher with at least 25 at-bats in LCS competition.

BRIAN SNITKER

This is Brian Snitker's third term on the Braves' major league coaching staff, this time as third base coach.

"Snitker's an outstanding baseball man and a great, great third base coach," said Cox, who plucked Snitker from the managerial seat at Triple-A Richmond, in 2007 after he'd spent 17 seasons as a minor league manager at just about every level.

Along the way, he chalked up a 1,140-1,145 managerial record, winning two league championships and two manager of



TONY FARRUGIA / GETTY IMAGES

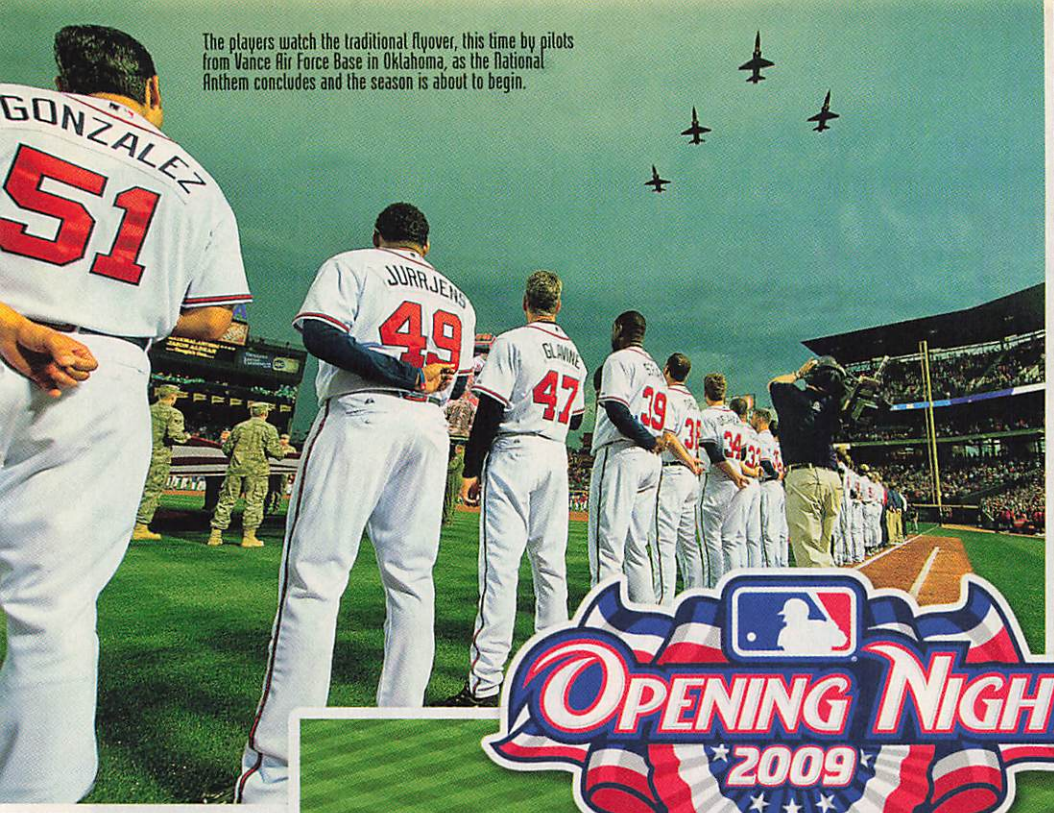
the year awards (1999 and 2000 with Myrtle Beach). Having coached current Braves Blaine Boyer, Jeff Francoeur, Kelly Johnson, Brian McCann, Peter Moylan, Gregor Blanco and Martin Prado, made the call to Atlanta that much better for Snitker.

"To manage is fun, but I love what I'm doing now," said Snitker, 54, who was bullpen coach in 1985 and in 1988 and '89. "You have a stake in the outcome of the game, and it's a great time to be here, because I've managed most of the guys that are here."

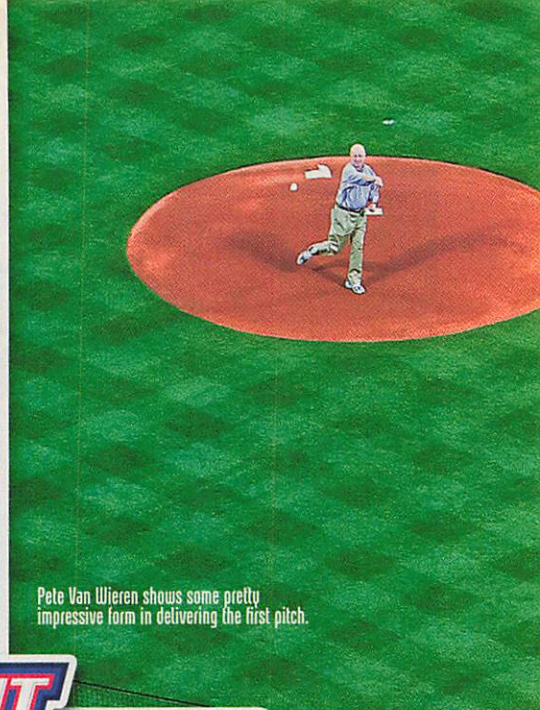
Playing traffic cop can be as challenging as being manager.

"It can be a little hectic at times," he said with his easy laugh. "But I enjoy that pressure, and being out there having to make those decisions."

DID YOU KNOW? Snitker was signed by the Braves as an undrafted free agent in 1977 and after a four-year catching career, was offered a job as an instructor by the club's farm director, Hank Aaron.

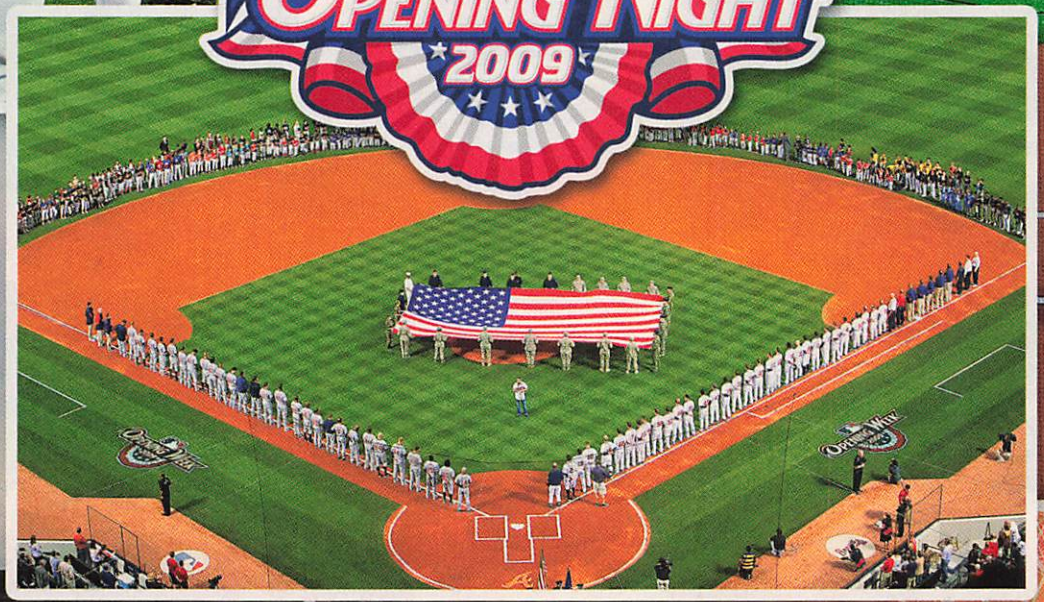


The players watch the traditional flyover, this time by pilots from Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma, as the National Anthem concludes and the season is about to begin.

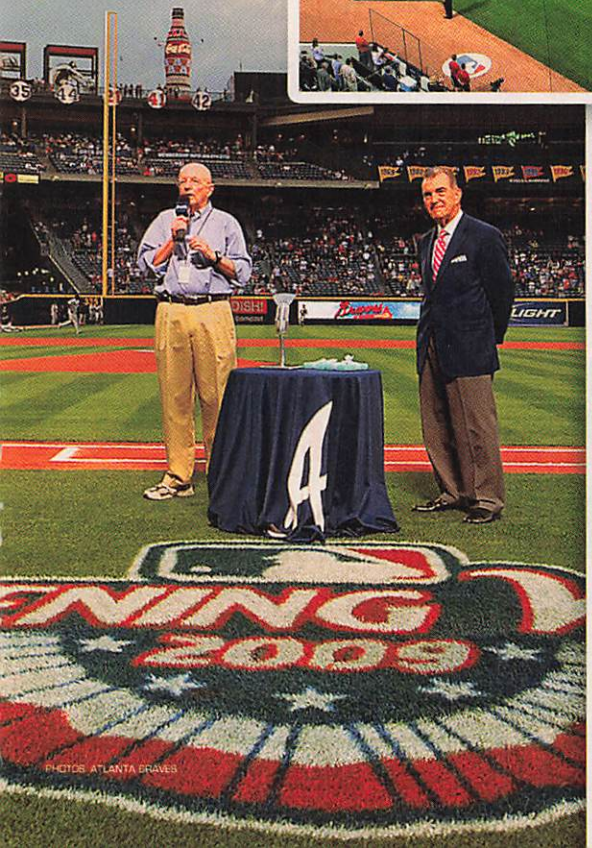


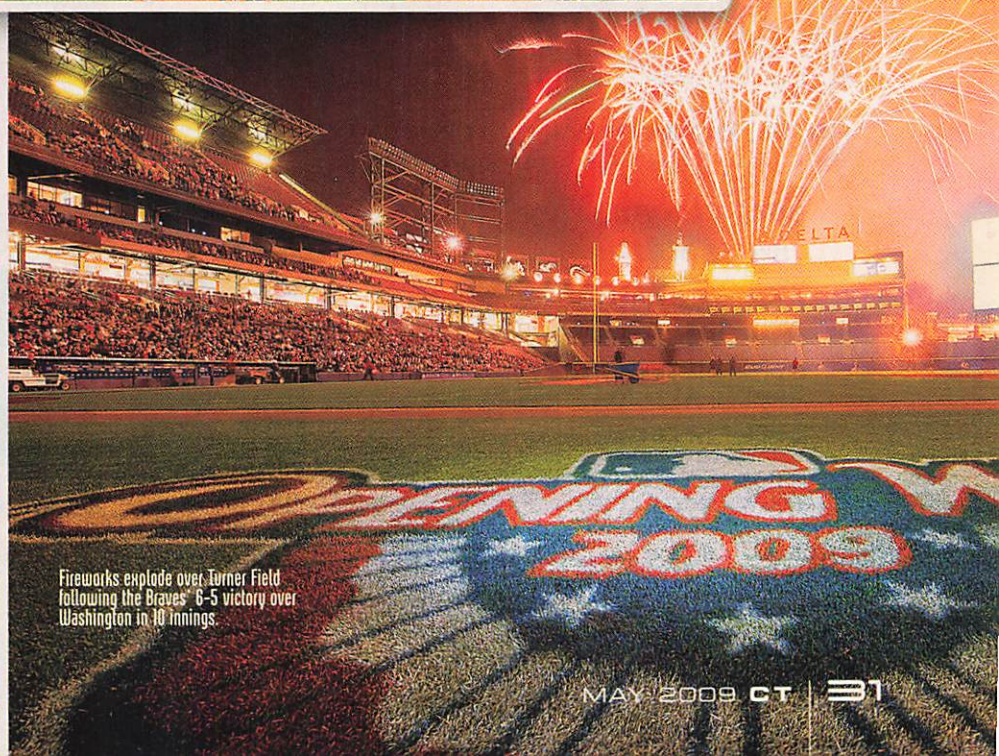
Pete Van Wieren shows some pretty impressive form in delivering the first pitch.

OPENING NIGHT 2009



Braves Hall of Fame broadcaster Pete Van Wieren, who retired after the 2008 season, addresses the crowd as team president John Schuerholz looks on.





Fireworks explode over Turner Field following the Braves' 6-5 victory over Washington in 10 innings.

PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

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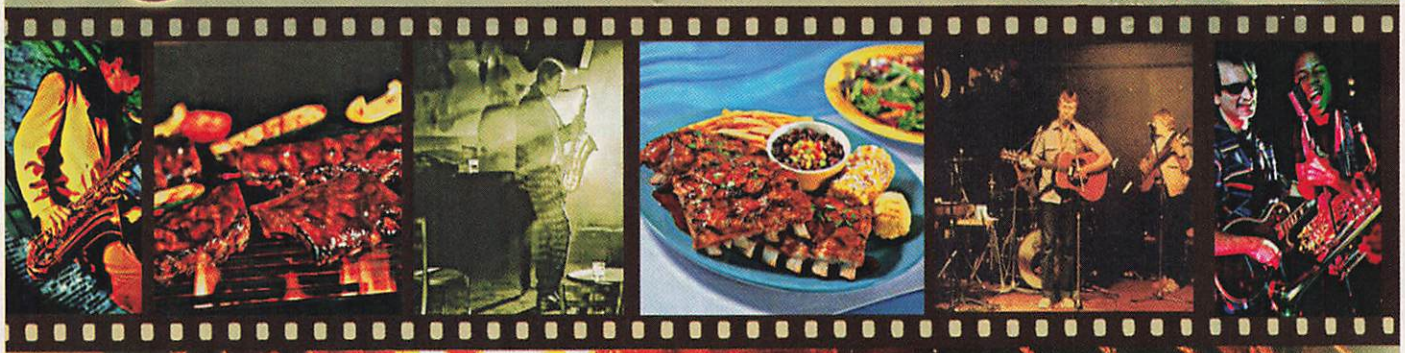

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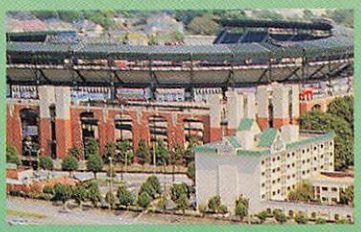

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Shooting Stars

Bit Players Usually Burn Out Quickly, But Their Contributions During "The Streak" Were Critical

BY JON COOPER

Talk of the Braves' unprecedented run of 14 consecutive division titles (1991-2005) typically brings up names with star power, such as Terry Pendleton, David Justice, Fred McGriff, Chipper Jones and, of course, Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine and John Smoltz.

But the charm of that run went well beyond the stars. It came from the contributions and special memories created by the guys at the end of the bench or out of the bullpen who found a way to make an impact.

These were the guys that may not have been around long, but they were around long enough to make significant contributions.

"Each and every guy that was on those rosters, from 1991 to 2005, helped us win those 14 championships, had a hand in helping us win a game here and there," said Chipper Jones.

Here's just a sampling of some of those unsung heroes that helped establish the longest streak of first-place finishes in the history of major professional sports.

ATLANTA BRAVES

FRANCISCO CABRERA

Braves fans know where they were when Sid slid, but were it not for Francisco Cabrera, Bream might not have had the chance to slide. The Dominican-born reserve catcher/first baseman became an indelible part of Braves lore with his two-out, pennant-winning hit that completed the dramatic, three-run, ninth-inning comeback in Game 7 of the 1992 NLCS against Pittsburgh.

But Cabrera, acquired from the Toronto Blue Jays on Aug. 24, 1989, with lefty Tony Castillo for righty reliever Jim Acker, was memorable for more than just that hit.

"He showed up to get you every day," recalled Terry Pendleton. "He could flat-out hit, and he showed what he was capable of doing on center stage. He was always a guy that had fun, and he loved to play the game."

"He's a classic example of a guy who maybe didn't play all the time, but you liked to have in your organization that you could call him up and rely on him," added Tom Glavine. "He's one of those great stories that people forget about."

The same can be said of another of Cabrera's huge hits, which has been almost completely overshadowed by the "Sid Slid" single. Cabrera was a mere .254 career hitter with 17 homers and 62 RBIs, but on Aug. 21, 1991, delivered a three-run homer with two outs in the ninth inning off Cincinnati reliever Rob Dibble that turned a 9-6 deficit into a 9-9 tie. Atlanta won in 13 innings and remained 2 1/2 games behind the Dodgers. The Braves never dropped further back than 2 1/2 games, and the next day began a charge to first place.

Cabrera played one more season with Atlanta, going 2-for-3 in the '93 LCS against Philadelphia, but never made it back to the majors after that. His big league career consisted of just 351 career at-bats.

MIKE DEVEREAUX

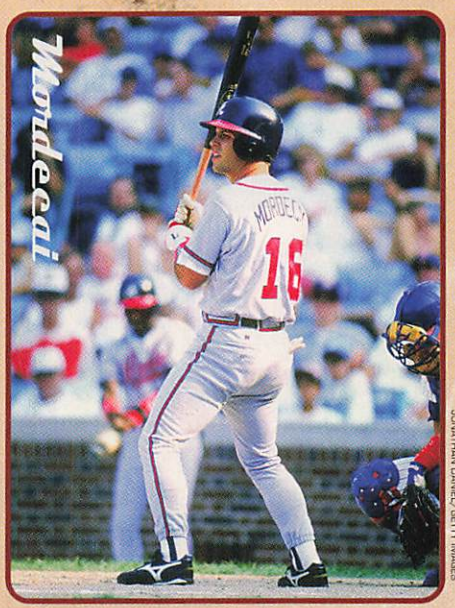
Mike Devereaux was a nine-year veteran outfielder when he arrived on Aug. 25, 1995, from the White Sox in a trade for an outfield prospect named Andre King.

Better known for his glove (career .988 fielder) than for his bat (career batting average of .254, though he hit 24 homers with 107 RBIs for Baltimore in 1992), Devereaux made the most of his first taste of post-season play that October, winning MVP honors in the NLCS by hitting .308 and spurring the Braves' sweep of Cincinnati.

"Devo got an opportunity and made the most of it," recalled Glavine. "He was another guy that was just kind of a bit player, then all of a sudden got into the post-season and found himself playing every day (due to David Justice's knee injury) and ended up being MVP of the LCS."

Devereaux drove in the winning run in the top of the 11th inning of Game 1 off Reds reliever Mike Jackson, added a run-scoring double in Game 2, and then sealed the sweep in Game 4, with a three-run homer in the seventh inning, again off Jackson, as Atlanta finished the Reds, 6-0. Devereaux's five RBIs in the series matched the entire Reds' offensive output in the series.

He left as a free agent that November, returning to Baltimore, and also played with Texas and the Dodgers before retiring in 1998.



JONATHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES

MIKE MORDECAI

Only 5-11, 175 pounds, Mike Mordecai was a sixth-round draft pick of Atlanta in 1989, who between 1994 and 1997 filled in at second base for Mark Lemke, but also started the first four games of the 1996 season at third, for the injured Chipper Jones.

"Mike was rock-solid, steady," said John Schuerholz. "We knew what Mike was from the time he signed his first minor league contract with us. [There were] not a lot of fancy things about Mike, just a real reliable guy."

Mordecai proved very reliable in Game 2 of the 1995 Division Series in Colorado. He followed a game-tying single by Jones and another hit by Devereaux with an RBI single that gave Atlanta a 5-4 lead on the way to a 7-4 victory.

Mordecai also had a knack for beating the Philadelphia Phillies. His first career homer came on May 10, 1994, a three-run shot off Doug Jones as part of a seven-run ninth in a 15-inning, 10-9 win. He hit .288 for his career against the Phils, with six of his 24 career homers coming against them. His 23 RBIs against Philly were the most against any team.

"We called him 'The little Professor,'" said Cox, with a smile. "He knew the game really well. He was a versatile guy, could

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

play a lot of positions, and was another guy that was a tough out."

Mordecai went on to play with Montreal and Florida and was instrumental in the Marlins' 2003 World Series championship. He retired in 2005 after a 12-year career and is currently coaching his alma mater, Houston Academy, in Dothan, Ala.

ATLANTA BRAVES

KERRY LIGTENBERG

Pitching may not be rocket science, but in 1998, reliever Kerry Ligtenberg proved that a little science can go a long way. The owner of a degree in chemical engineering from the University of Minnesota, he concocted the right formula as a closer to lead the Braves in saves with 30, seventh in the NL that season.

"We used to call Kerry 'the mad scientist,'" recalled Schuerholz with a laugh. "He was one of the smartest guys I was ever around in terms of academics. He did a great job."

Ligtenberg closed 30 of 34 opportunities, including 18 in a row from May 27 through Aug. 27, after taking over when Mark Wohlers' control problems led to his demotion to Triple-A.

His improbable journey to the major leagues from the Southern Minny Stars of the independent Prairie League came via a tip from that team's manager, former Braves catcher Greg Olson. The Braves' compensation was a bargain.

"Bats and balls," said Schuerholz of the cost for acquiring Ligtenberg, "but he was a heckuva lot more valuable than that."

Ligtenberg was 12-12, with 34 saves and a 3.04 ERA in 254 games over five seasons with Atlanta (1997-2002), then pitched in Baltimore, Toronto and Arizona, but was hindered by elbow problems the rest of his career.

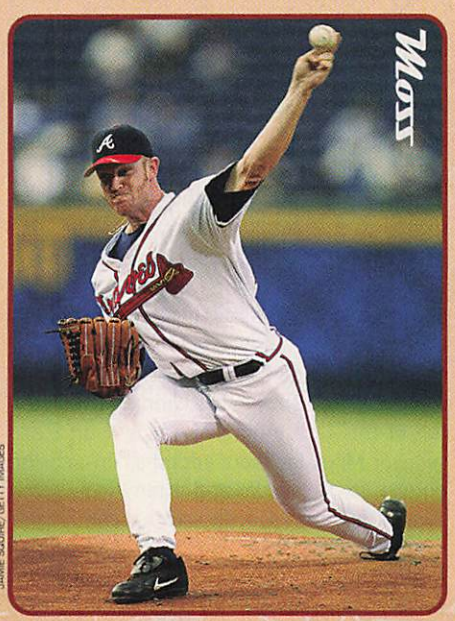
DAMIAN MOSS

Australian-born lefthander Damian Moss had his magical season in 2002, when he made the team in spring training, became part of the rotation, and went 12-6 with a 3.42 ERA in 29 starts. His 12 wins were only three off the Braves' single-season rookie record, set by Craig McMurtry in 1983.

The then-25-year-old Moss had worked seven seasons in the Braves' system (he missed all of '98 with an injury), but found his groove in '02. He limited opponents to a .221 batting average, allowed two runs or less in 20 of 29 starts, and no-hit powerful St. Louis for seven innings in a May 3 start. His timing was perfect, because the rotation needed another arm after John Smoltz was named full-time closer.

"Mossie is a guy that you could arguably have thought we would have gotten more out of," said Glavine. "But certainly he was productive for us when he was here. Unfortunately, he was one of those kids that had decent stuff but had a hard time commanding it."

Moss, who was one of the first to be labeled the "next Tom Glavine," never pitched another game for Atlanta after '02. He was shipped to San Francisco that winter in a trade to acquire righthander Russ Ortiz. He also pitched for Baltimore and Tampa Bay. He worked his way back to the Braves organization, pitching for Richmond in 2006 and again last season.



JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

CHRIS HAMMOND

The 2002 season produced one of the most remarkable and heart-warming stories of perseverance in the person of Chris Hammond.

The 36-year-old lefthander, who had already pitched nine seasons in the majors but retired for two years, due to a debilitating elbow injury, pitched for Richmond in 2001 and then took a shot with the Braves in 2002. He surprised the Braves by making the team and proceeded to befuddle the entire National League.

"Oh my, you talk about a guy who resurrected his career!" raved Glavine. "He was amazing that year. I don't think lefties hit anything against him. He came up with that changeup that was just so slow and so hard for guys to stay on, and he ended up becoming very effective against righthanders, as well. He was one of those guys that came out of nowhere, provided that bridge in the bullpen that allowed us to get to the back end of the bullpen."

Armed with a mid-80s fastball and a changeup that came in as slow as 58 miles per hour, Hammond compiled a 7-2 record with a 0.95 ERA, becoming just the third pitcher since 1900 to post a season ERA under 1.00 (minimum 70 innings). Hammond didn't allow an earned run after June 30, a string of 32 appearances covering 35 2/3 innings, and limited opponents to a .195 average (lefties hit only .174).

Hammond and fellow reclamation project Darren Holmes made a left-right punch for a bullpen that was 30-14, with a 2.60 ERA.

"[Hammond], and 'Holmsie' (a 1.81 ERA in 2002) did the same thing, kind of came over here and resurrected themselves, which a lot of guys have done over the years," said Glavine. "It's a testament to Bobby (Cox) that he gives those guys a chance and that they're able to come here and figure something out when they do."

Hammond pitched four more seasons in the majors, with the Yankees, Oakland, San Diego and Cincinnati, before finally retiring in 2006, at age 40.

SHANE REYNOLDS

Shane Reynolds joined the ranks of the resurrected in 2003. The 35-year-old righthander, who won 19 games in 1998 with Houston, came to Atlanta following a 2002 season in which he was 3-6 with a 4.86 ERA and underwent back surgery. He was released in March 2003 by the Astros and given a shot by the Braves.

"Shane was a guy who came in as our

fifth starter. Nobody was really expecting much out of him – if we could get 8 or 10 wins out of him we would have been happy. We ended up getting 11 out of him," said Chipper Jones, who still hunts with Reynolds during the off-season. "He's a guy who really knew how to keep you in the ballgame."

Reynolds made 29 starts and worked 167 1/3 innings. While his ERA was 5.43, the highest of his career, Reynolds gutted out an 11-9 record.

Reynolds allowed only one unearned run and seven hits in his first two starts (a total of 12 1/3 innings), becoming the first pitcher since Larry McWilliams in 1978 to not allow an earned run in his first two Braves starts, and he had 11 quality starts (at least six innings allowing three runs or less).

He received plenty of help. The Braves averaged 6.45 runs in his starts, scored at least eight runs for him 11 times, and hit double-figures six times.

"We always made fun of him," Jones recalled. "I think he led the league in run support. So, whenever Shane was out there, we played some of our best baseball, at least offensively. He was able to get a lot of wins and help us win the division that year."

Reynolds did not make the playoff roster in'03 and was released after the season. He pitched one more game with Arizona before retiring.

RON VESLEY / GETTY IMAGES

NICK GREEN

When All-Star second baseman Marcus Giles broke his collarbone on May 15, 2004, the Braves reached into their farm system and called up local product Nick Green from Richmond.

Green, who was hitting .377 when called up, came out swinging, getting hits in nine of his first 10 games with Atlanta. By the time May was over, he was hitting .304, with four multi-hit games. He began June with a bang as well, delivering a two-out, three-run, ninth-inning homer to wipe out a 6-3 Montreal lead (J.D. Drew won the game with a walk-off homer on the next pitch). On July 2, Green again provided late-game heroics, this time against Boston, tying the game with a sacrifice fly in the 10th inning, then winning the game with a walk-off, three-run homer in the 12th.

"Nick's a local kid, he worked hard in the minor leagues, could swing the bat and was always a reliable minor league productive guy," recalled Schuerholz of the Braves' 32nd-round pick in the 1998 draft. "He came up to us, and when he was in there, he did the same thing."

"Nick Green was in the organization for quite some time," added Jones. "He and I work out together in the off-season to this day. He was a guy who ran well, a good defender, and got some big hits for us."

Green, who still lives in Atlanta, was shipped to Tampa Bay after the '04 season, and has since played with Pittsburgh, Seattle and the Yankees. He started the '09 season in Boston where he won a spot as backup shortstop in spring training.

CHARLES THOMAS

The 25-year-old with the dazzling smile, blazing speed, and a knack for doing whatever it takes to succeed, was a similar shot of adrenaline to the 2004 Braves' outfield that Green was to the infield.

"Chucky Thomas came up and probably had the greatest little stretch in his entire career," said Cox. "Guys can get hot, and Chucky was a sparkplug for us."

Thomas, who was tearing up Richmond (.358, four HR, 32 RBIs, 31 runs in 61 games), got called up to Atlanta on June 23 and solved the dilemma in left field caused by Chipper Jones moving back to third base.

"Chucky T" made his first start on June 25. The Braves were 33-38, in fourth place, 6 1/2 games back in the NL East.

"I remember he and Nick Green were joined at the hip," recalled Jones. "Charles Thomas was a kid with just a magnetic personality, great kid, left-handed hitter, who could fly, good defender. I just remember him being a sponge. He was glad to be here, he was willing to do anything that it took to stay here and help us win."

SCOTT CUNNINGHAM / GETTY IMAGES

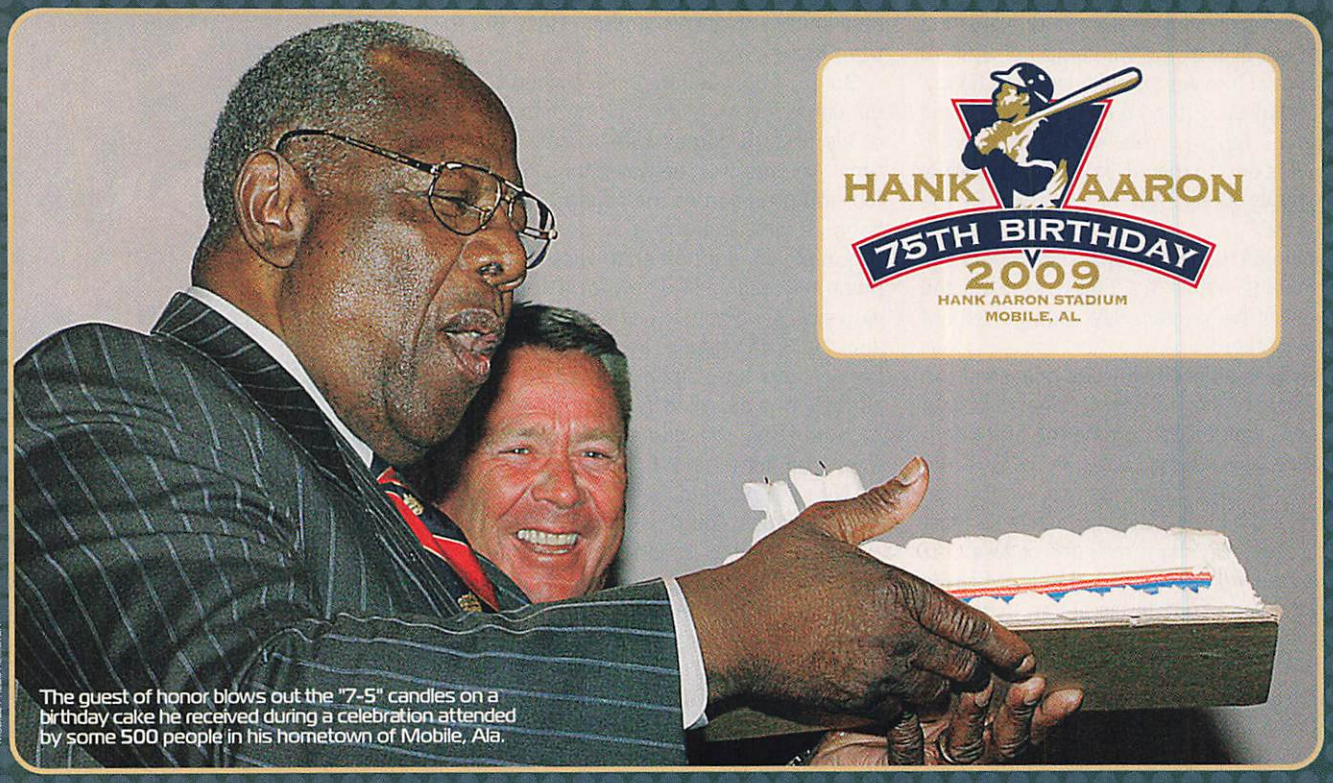
With Thomas batting primarily out of the eighth spot, Atlanta went 63-28 the rest of the way to win the East by 10 games. He started 7-for-19 and had three-multi-hit games in his first eight, then hit a scorching .342 in July, with a seven-game hitting streak, three three-hit games, and his first multi-homer game on July 27 at Pittsburgh. He also was spectacular in the field, with a .993 fielding percentage with seven assists.

"Charles Thomas catapulted himself off our Triple-A club and was as dynamic and exciting a player for a short period as we have ever had," said Schuerholz. "As a result, he ended up getting an opportunity in the major leagues with another organization."

That opportunity came in the winter of 2005, when Atlanta traded Thomas to Oakland in the Tim Hudson deal. He played only 30 games in Oakland before he was sent to back to Triple-A, and then was traded to Milwaukee, where he finished the 2007 season at the Triple-A level.

As this season takes shape, Braves fans should keep an eye on the reserve players who made the roster late in spring training or might get called up from the minors. They may not have big names, but they can help make the difference between victory and defeat.

"They make a huge difference if you can assemble them right, and we think we've got ours right this year," said Cox. "We're going to have one of the best benches that we've had in a while."



MOBILE PRESS-REGISTER

The guest of honor blows out the "7-5" candles on a birthday cake he received during a celebration attended by some 500 people in his hometown of Mobile, Ala.

BELATED WISHES

Aaron's Hometown Of Mobile Rolls Out Red Carpet For 75th Birthday Celebration

BY MIKE HERNDON

IT MAY HAVE BEEN TWO MONTHS LATE, but when Hank Aaron's hometown called him home for a 75th birthday celebration, the Hall of Famer didn't hesitate.

"I came because this is my hometown," said Aaron, who turned 75 on Feb. 5. "It's just a good time to come here, to see all my friends, and to be back in this city, because it means an awful lot to me."

More than 500 people turned out to honor one of Mobile's favorite native sons on April 7 with a 75th birthday gala at the Arthur Outlaw Convention Center. It was the second such celebration for Aaron, who was honored in February in Atlanta when former president Bill Clinton and Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig were among the dignitaries in attendance.

Aaron's wife, Billye, his daughters, and several other family members joined him for the event in Mobile, which was also attended by Minor League Baseball president Pat O'Conner, former New York Mets great Cleon Jones, NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series driver Rick Crawford, and several local dignitaries.

"Hank Aaron is a man of few words and many deeds," O'Conner said. "Hank played at a time when it wasn't anything for Bob Gibson to put a fastball in your wallet. And he would go on to first base. And he would remember, and he would try to make you pay the next time."

O'Conner described Aaron as "an icon in baseball and an institution in America."

"For all the players who are here, I encourage you to emulate this man," he said. "For all the young kids here, if you don't know about this man, I encourage you to learn about this man."

The event, originally scheduled Feb. 12 but postponed due to a conflict on the civic calendar, was held one day before the 35th anniversary of Aaron's 715th home run, which broke Babe Ruth's long-standing record. Aaron's mark of 755 homers stood for 33 years, but Mobile County commissioner Steve Nodine left no doubt where Aaron stands in his hometown, where the minor-league baseball stadium and a major downtown thoroughfare are named for him.

"He truly is the home run king," Nodine said of Aaron. "He was truly a hero with his character, his integrity, and the way he played the game.

"We have a Hank Aaron Stadium and a Hank Aaron Loop, and

it's because of this great man's contribution to youth, not only in this community but around the world."

Aaron, whose Chasing the Dream Foundation for underprivileged kids received the proceeds of his Atlanta birthday party, said he's always felt an obligation to serve as a role model for young people, from the tiniest Little Leaguer to the minor-leaguers from Mobile's Double-A BayBears in attendance at the gala.

"I was gifted to play baseball, but I had other things I wanted to do," Aaron said. "I wanted to make sure that kids understood that whatever you do in life, whatever you think your ability is in life, there is no shortcut in life."

With a not-so-subtle nod toward baseball's recent steroid scandals, he added: "I don't need to talk about what you think I'm thinking, but that's exactly what I'm talking about."

Proceeds from the Mobile event and a preceding silent auction of baseball memorabilia went to benefit the BayBears' charitable organization and the Hank Aaron Childhood Home Museum. The museum will be located outside Mobile's Hank Aaron Stadium, where the house Aaron grew up in has been moved and is currently undergoing renovation.

"He is an ambassador for (Mobile) nationally and internationally," said Mobile mayor Sam Jones. "We often go to cities and they say, 'Are you the mayor of Mobile?' and I say yes. They say, 'That's where Hank Aaron is from, isn't it?'"

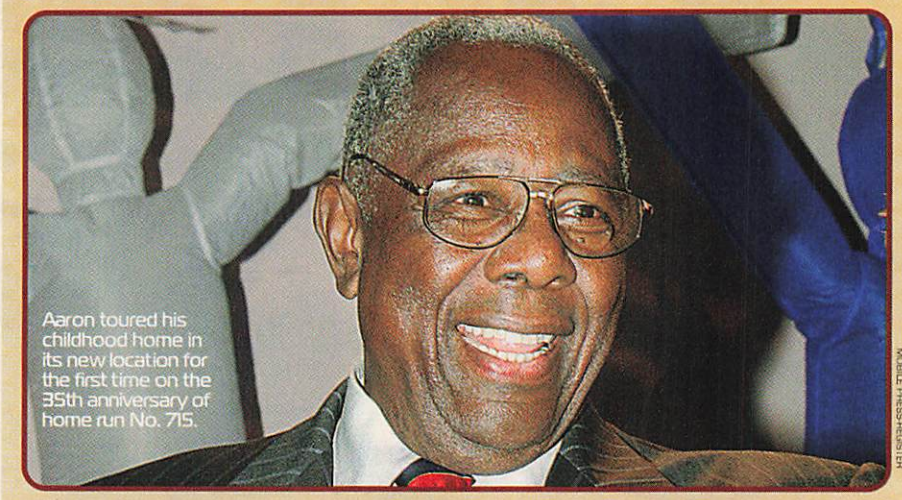
Jones, who went to high school in Mobile with Aaron's brother, James, recounted a particularly memorable exchange from a trip to Ichihara, Japan.

"They had two requests," Jones said of city leaders there. "They wanted to know when the museum was going to be open at Hank Aaron Stadium, and they also wanted a baseball signed by Hank Aaron. The entire city council's and the mayor's hero was Hank Aaron."

With such celebrity comes responsibility and the opportunity to touch lives, and that's why Aaron said his return to Mobile was more than just another birthday celebration.

"The most important thing really," he said, "is to make sure that all the youngsters here, regardless of whether they remember when I played, I just feel like they need to see me and know who I am, and let them know that, no matter what their dream may be, if they play hard and play by the rules, that they too can reach the rainbow."

CHILDHOOD HOME TAKING SHAPE AS MUSEUM



Aaron toured his childhood home in its new location for the first time on the 35th anniversary of home run No. 715.

MOBILE PRESS-REGISTER

BY MIKE HERNDON

BEFORE SHE MOVED AWAY in 2006, Estella Aaron often got unannounced visitors to her home in Mobile. Sometimes, she didn't even know them.

Strangers would show up at the door of the home, wanting to see where Aaron's son, Hall of Famer Hank Aaron, once lived, said Aaron's sister, Alfredia Scott. And so Estella Aaron would give them a tour of the house her late husband, Herbert, built using salvaged lumber she collected while he was working in Mobile's shipyards.

"She would go over and get lumber from scraps," said Scott, the wife of U.S. Congressman David Scott (D-Ga.), of her mother, who passed away last year. "In the afternoon, he would come home and pick up another piece of lumber or a couple of pieces of lumber, if he wasn't too tired, and put it on the house. That's how the house started."

Fans who want to see the house don't have to look for it in Aaron's old Toulminville neighborhood anymore. With the Aaron family's blessing, the city of Mobile and its Double-A minor league franchise, the BayBears, moved the structure to the BayBears' ballpark, already named in Aaron's honor, and are renovating the house into a museum chronicling Aaron's life. It's due to open late this summer.

Aaron visited the house in its new location for the first time on April 8, the 35th anniversary of his record-breaking 715th home run, and was moved by what he saw.

"I think it's going to be good for young people to come in and see some of the things I went through as a youngster," Aaron said. "I know my mother and my father both are somewhere up there smiling."

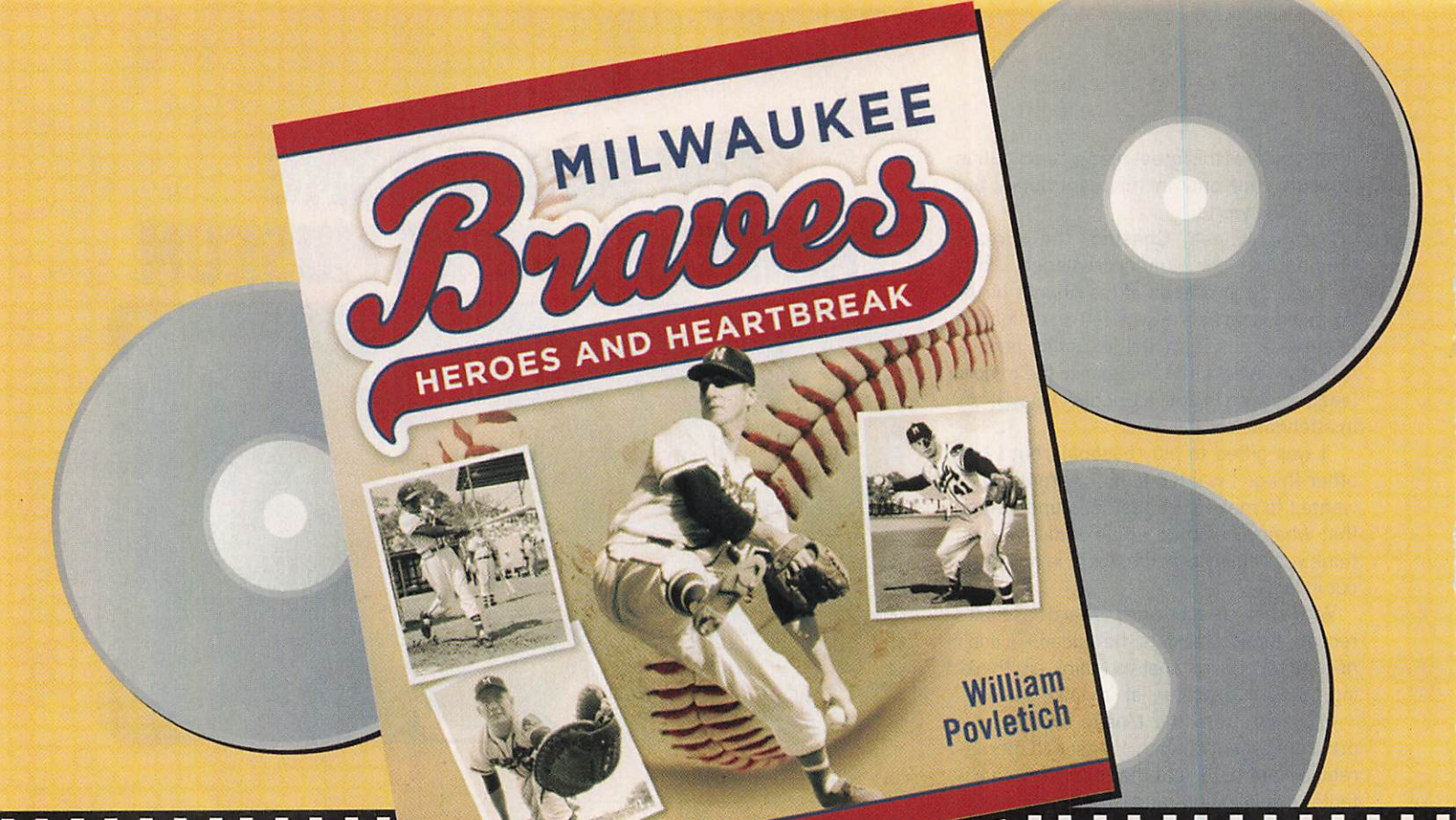
The original structure was 720 square feet, built in 1942 on a pair of lots purchased for $53 each. A pair of additions in the 1950s and '60s enlarged it to its current 1,600 square feet and indoor plumbing was added.

Some of the original boards were still visible on the outside of the home as Aaron and several other family members walked inside, where many of the rooms featured their original beadboard walls and hardwood flooring.

Aaron said walking through the home brought the memories of his childhood flooding back.

"You think about lying in bed with your two other siblings," he said. "The bedroom wasn't that large. You think about who got the middle and who got the ends. I always tried to fight and get in the bed first, because the middle was the best. You always got some cover in the middle.

"No matter what you've achieved, you have to stay humble," he added, "because it's not too far from where you've grown up."



Milwaukee Flashback

New DVD And Companion Book Explore Franchise Shifts That Helped Shape MLB History

BY BOB BUEGE

BASEBALL FANS RELISH THE MYTHOLOGY of the sport. They want to believe that The Babe really did hit a homer that saved 11-year-old Johnny Sylvester from dying and that the Bambino "called his shot" in the '32 World Series. They even like to think that Shoeless Joe Jackson could come walking out of a cornfield in Iowa and that "Moonlight" Graham could rescue a little girl by crossing the white line.

In the end, though, it's a big business, and thus, it's all about money.

If we need to be reminded of the economic truth behind what Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig calls "the industry," a new documentary produced collaboratively by Milwaukee Public Television and the Wisconsin Historical Society provides an interesting reality check.

Award-winning filmmaker William Povletich chose the Braves' three-city saga since World War II to prove his point.

On Mar. 12, at Milwaukee's Discovery World Museum, 160 baseball aficionados, including former Braves Johnny Logan (SS, 1951-61) and Felix Mantilla (INF/OF, 1956-61), attended the premiere showing of "Braves New World." This 56-minute cinematic history and tribute shows how the Braves, in 1953, fled the large shadow cast by the Red Sox in Boston to find financial rebirth in Milwaukee, along the shores of Lake Michigan.

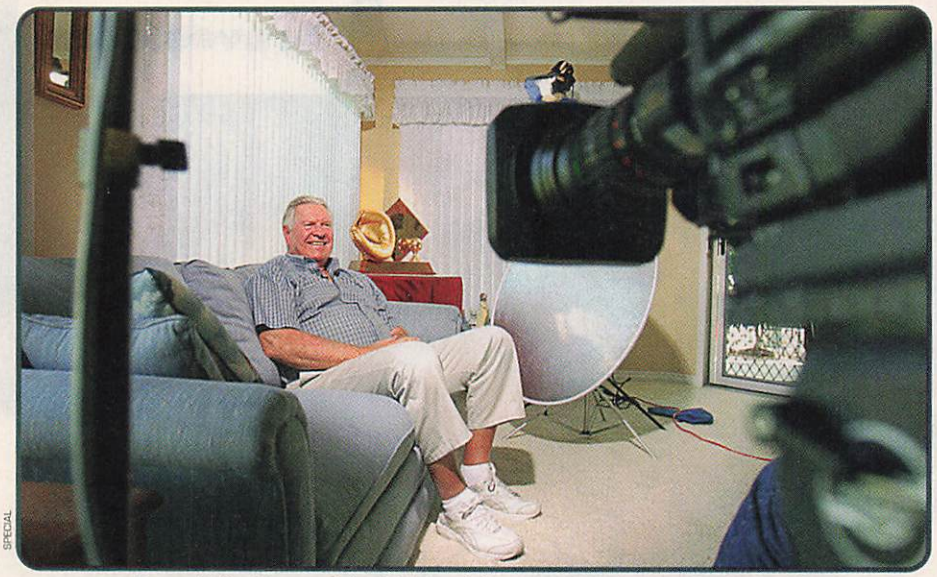
Braves owner Lou Perini not only struck pay dirt, but also cracked open the vast territory that remained uncharted by the four major professional team sports.

As sportswriter Frank Deford explains in the film, in 1953 only 18 cities had a team in one of the four major professional sports. Today, he said, 43 cities proudly call themselves home to at least one big-league sports franchise. As Deford said, "Perini started a landslide."

In 1944, Perini and two other construction magnates, collectively dubbed "The Three Little Steam Shovels," purchased the Boston Braves. The Steam Shovels began applying their business acumen to their baseball club and were rewarded with a pennant in 1948. But from that point, the club's fortunes sagged. Perini and his brothers bought out the other two Steam Shovels.

David Perini, Lou's son, says in the film that his father used the Braves as a "marketing tool" for his construction empire. When the baseball team began hemorrhaging money, Lou Perini began searching discreetly - "He never even told my mother," David Perini says - for a new baseball home.

The obvious location was Milwaukee. Perini owned the territorial rights through his American Association Milwaukee Brewers, and Beer City had just built a new ballpark. Baseball's first fran-



SPECIAL

Braves Hall of Fame catcher Del Crandall prepares for a taping of a documentary segment at his home in Brea, California.

chise relocation in half a century presented uncertainty and risk, but Perini decided to take the chance.

In 1953, their first season in Milwaukee, the Braves set a National League attendance record (over 1.8 million) and earned Perini a profit of $1.5 million, which was huge in those days. Two years later, Brooklyn Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley sat in Milwaukee County Stadium with New York Giants boss Horace Stoneham, watching the All-Star Game in a city gone berserk over its baseball team. Within three years, the National League clubs from New York City migrated to the West Coast and fulfilled what, in the film, Milwaukee sports radio host Doug Russell calls "baseball's manifest destiny." Expansion soon followed.

After two pennants and a World Series championship, the Braves gradually declined in the standings and in the stands. Meanwhile, public hostility toward Perini and his club grew in reaction to a new prohibition against carry-ins of beer and Perini's stubborn refusal to allow the televising of out-of-town ballgames. By November of 1962, Perini had grown weary of the baseball wars. He sold the Braves to a syndicate of Chicago investors headed by Bill Bartholomay.

Rumors about the Braves leaving Milwaukee soon followed. Predictably, team officials denied their intention to go elsewhere. In the film, long-time Atlanta sports columnist Furman Bisher explains that the club's motive for denying the obvious was simply to keep fans coming to the park.

"Everybody knew they were lying," Bisher said wryly.

It soon became clear that Atlanta was the main suitor, led by a spirited triumvirate: Mayor Ivan Allen Jr.; banker Mills Lane Jr.; and Arthur Montgomery, president of Coca-Cola. They made an offer the new Braves owners could not refuse.

"We didn't buy the club to move it," said Bartholomay, "but we also didn't buy it to go broke."

The person assigned the task of reading the official announcement of the franchise shift was former Braves righthander turned public relations specialist, Ernie Johnson. In the film he is visibly uncomfortable discussing it.

"No one liked it," Johnson admitted, "but it was gonna happen."

Johnson discloses that after making the announcement, he received threatening calls.

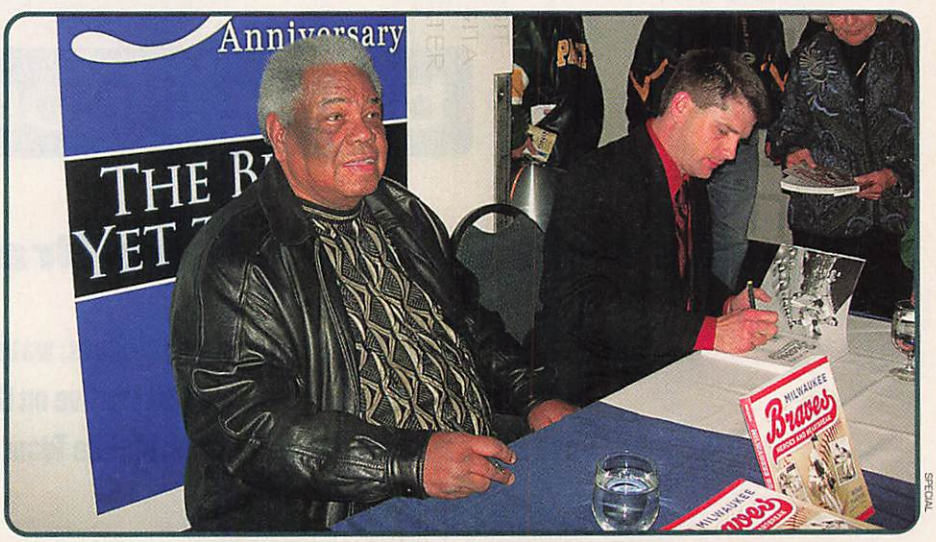
The statement Johnson read proclaimed that the Braves would move to Atlanta after the 1964 season. Milwaukee's County Board, however, filed suit in circuit court and ultimately delayed the move for one year. The final season in Wisconsin was one long series of accusations, denials, and insults. Bisher describes it as "sort of a bush league scuffle between two cities."

It ended badly, but the Braves' adventure in Milwaukee created a sensation that transformed the face of Major League Baseball. Milwaukee Braves catcher and team captain Del Crandall sums up the brief love affair between the city and its baseball team: "It'll never be duplicated."

"Braves New World" is a companion to a book that Povletich authored and released simultaneously with the film. "Milwaukee Braves: Heroes and Heartbreak", published by Wisconsin Historical Society Press, is a detailed re-enactment of the team's 13-year history. Povletich's book tells the team's story in six phases, from arrival to their peak of success to their departure. More than 100 historic photos, all well-chosen and many never before seen by the public, bring the tale to life.

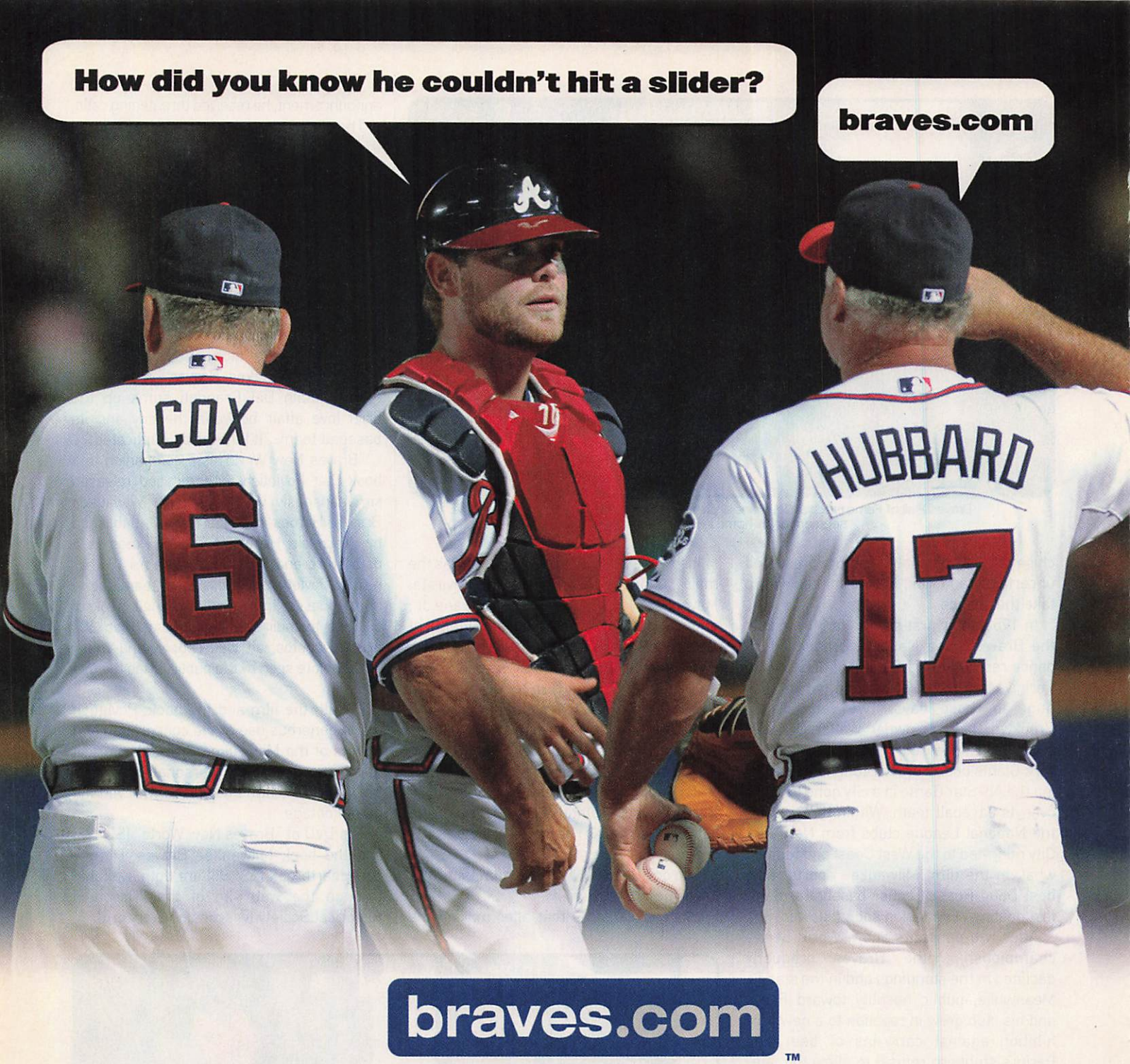
In both the film and the book, Povletich made generous use of the cooperation and talents of the Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, including personal interviews he used in the film intermixed with vintage game footage.

The DVD of "Braves New World" ($24.95) and the book Milwaukee Braves: Heroes and Heartbreak ($24.95) are both available through the web site of the Wisconsin Historical Society (wisconsinhistory.org).



SPECIAL

Former Brave Felix Mantilla (L) signs copies of the book with author and documentary producer Bill Povletich (R).



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TIME FOR A CHANGE

Chipper Lays Down The Law In Motivational Speech Before Season Opener

BY MARK BOWMAN
OF MLB.COM

WITH JOHN SMOLTZ GONE, Chipper Jones has willingly accepted the leadership role that accompanies his status as the club's longest-tenured player. Thus, before the Opening Night victory over the Phillies April 5, the veteran third baseman delivered a motivational speech that left a good impression on Jeff Francoeur and some of the other Braves players.

"I said some things that needed to kind of get out in the open and let people know that we're not going to settle for finishing third or fourth in the division," Jones said. "We're just not going to let that happen, and if we do finish third or fourth, it's not going to be because we played like we did last year."

While injuries played a large role in the 90-loss season the Braves endured last year, Jones and some of the other veterans also got a sense that some of the younger players might have grown complacent with simply having the opportunity to play in the majors.

During a January meeting at Turner Field, Jones, Tim Hudson, Brian McCann and Francoeur aired some dirty laundry and agreed that it was their responsibility to ensure every player understood the need to work together to minimize the possibility that Atlanta would miss the post-season for a fourth straight season.

"Some of the younger players, I don't know if they're intimidated or scared to come up to me sometimes, but I'm just letting them know that if you've got a question, ask me. There's a good chance that I've been through it," Jones said. "I want those young guys to produce just like the rest of us did.

"I don't want them to be satisfied with mediocrity. It's time for some of these guys in here to take the next step. Some of the results we got last year aren't going to be acceptable. We've got to step it up."

After delivering his speech, Jones watched with pride when Derek Lowe provided eight scoreless innings during a 4-1 victory that included confidence-building home runs from Francoeur and Jordan Schafer, who became just the fifth player in franchise history to homer in his first career at-bat.

"Everybody in the country was tuned into that first game, and with the way we came out swinging early in the game and the way D-Lowe pitched, we served notice that we have a lot better club than we did the past couple of years," Jones said. "We're going to try our darndest to get back into contention."

Jones, who has been a mainstay in the Braves' lineup since the start of the 1995 World Series championship season, was somewhat reluctant in the past to step on Smoltz's toes. But with the righthander now in Boston, the All-Star third baseman says he's more than willing to broaden his leadership responsibilities.

"I've always yielded to guys who have more time than me," Jones said. "Whenever we had a meeting, Smoltzie would talk, and I'd come in second-hand. We had a relationship where whenever anything needed to be addressed with the pitching staff, he'd take care of it, and whenever something needed to be taken care of with a position player, I'd take care of it. Now that he's gone, that all falls on me."

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Now the senior spokesman on the team, Chipper challenged the younger players to stand up and be counted in a full-scale effort to get the Braves back in the playoffs.

BY BILL BALLEW

MISSISSIPPI HONORED WITH RINGS FOR LAST YEAR'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MISSISSIPPI BRAVES manager Philip Wellman has spent the past quarter-century in professional baseball, but didn't receive his first championship ring until mid-March. After admiring the ring with tears in his eyes, Wellman fulfilled a promise he has carried throughout his 25 years as a player, coach and manager.

"I made up my mind during the first year I played that I was going to give my first ring to my dad," Wellman said. "I'm just thankful that he's still around after all these years to get it. When I got that ring, I packaged it up and sat down to write a short note to my dad that turned out to be four pages. And I sent it to him by FedEx that same day."

BILL SETLIFF

The next day, Wellman received a phone call from his father that may have lasted 15 seconds. His dad called to say thanks, but both Wellmans were too choked up to continue the conversation.

"Winning that (Southern League) championship and then receiving that ring, it's a great sense of accomplishment," Wellman said. "It's a nice way to cap off what was an amazing turn of events for a great group of guys that came together and played so well during the second half. Things like that don't happen very often, and I've found out how humbling it can be once it finally does."

While the M-Braves received their rings during spring training in a small ceremony, Wellman and the 14 returning players from the 2008 squad were recognized in a grander presentation on Opening Night, April 9, at Mississippi's Trustmark Park. A crowd of 5,148, the second-highest total for a home opener since the ballpark opened in 2005, cheered the recipients after the fans received replica championship rings. The celebration continued for the second and third games, as well, with the team giving away replica championship ring trophies and championship bronze mini-plaques.

As far as the real deal is concerned, each ring consists of 22 diamonds with the M-Braves' logo in the middle. The word "resilient" is also carved into one side, exemplifying the character shown by the team.

"Any time your team wins a championship and you're able to distribute rings, it's very exciting," said Mississippi general manager Steve DeSalvo, who has been part of five titles during his 28 seasons in the minor leagues. "We always tell fans that since we're owned by Atlanta, our first priority is to develop ballplayers for the big leagues. However, fans want a winning team, and the players want to win."

DeSalvo recalled speaking with Wellman when the latter was named the M-Braves' manager. He said, "If we're not going to try to win, why do we keep score?" After watching his 2008 team open the season with a 2-15 record, Wellman probably wished they didn't keep up with the runs. Yet to overcome such long odds and finish with the title made the end result that much sweeter.

"I'm probably proudest of the 2008 team," DeSalvo said. "There really are not the proper words to describe that thrill and the pride knowing we had a terrific group of young players who never gave up. As Wellman said, and as our rings say, they were resilient."

Added Wellman, "Getting that ring was one of the highlights of my career. What it does is it makes you want to do it again."

DAL CANTON TRIBUTES

Bruce Dal Canton, one of the most popular and productive coaches in Braves history, continues to be remembered after succumbing to esophageal cancer last October. On Opening Night, April 9, the Myrtle Beach Pelicans honored their pitching coach for the past 10 years with a moving video tribute and by retiring his uniform number 43 prior to the game.

The Atlanta organization also hosted a private event to honor and pay special tribute to Dal Canton during the second annual Braves Memorial Golf Tournament, Mar. 16 at the Lake Buena Vista Golf Course at Disney World. Members of the Braves' player development staff and special guests participated, with proceeds from the event going to a selected charity in the name of Dal Canton.

GWINNETT
TRIPLE A

TOMMY HANSON did everything possible to earn a job in Atlanta's starting rotation during spring training, but a lack of open spots forced him to open at Triple-A Gwinnett. Hanson left no doubt regarding his readiness by striking out 10 Charlotte batters in 4 1/3 innings on Opening Night, April 9. His showing mirrored his effort from Opening Night 2008, when he struck out 13 for Myrtle Beach. After walking two batters in the first inning this season, Hanson gained the feel for his slider and started his domination in the second inning...

Kris Medlen, who also made a positive impression during big league camp, followed Hanson and worked 3 2/3 no-hit innings while striking out four. "Our feeling is he knows the things he needs to work on to

pitch in the big leagues," said Kurt Kemp, director of player development. "Kris understands the process, and like Tommy, he's going to be challenged and will learn by going up against veteran hitters."...

Triple-A rosters are typically littered with retreads, but the Braves have an impressive rotation of young arms that features Hanson as well as three others who have started in the majors - **Jo-Jo Reyes**, **James Parr** and **Charlie Morton**. The right-handed Morton was nearly as impressive as Hanson in his 2009 debut, striking out 12 and allowing one hit and one earned run over six innings against Charlotte on April 12, to earn International League Pitcher of the Week honors. The other Gwinnett starter is **Todd Redmond**, the reigning Southern League Pitcher of the Year...

According to Kemp, Reyes made as many positive strides during spring training as any pitcher in the minor league organization...

After saving 28 games at Mississippi last year, **Luis Valdez** is serving in the closer's role at Gwinnett. Valdez impressed the organization's coaching staff last year with his desire to pitch with the game on the line...

Middle infielder **Diory Hernandez** has reached the point in his development where he could fill an opening in Atlanta should a need arise. Kemp compares Hernandez's recent process with that of outfielder **Gregor Blanco** in 2008.

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

ATLANTA OFFICIALS hope Opening Night proves to be a harbinger for **Kala Ka'aihue**. The M-Braves first baseman hit a ball over the left-field wall at Trustmark Park and into the parking lot for his first home run of the season. Ka'aihue has been a slow starter the past two seasons...

Leftfielder **Matt Young** is back in Mississippi for the fourth straight season. After hitting .289 with 30 extra-base hits and 30 steals last year, Young felt he had done enough to merit a promotion to Gwinnett but was not about to hang his head. "I expected to be in Triple-A this season, no doubt about it," Young told the Jackson Clarion-Ledger. "Things just didn't work out. I've got to accept it and go out there and keep doing everything they ask me to do."...

The Braves obtained right-handed reliever **Rudy Darrow** during the final week of spring training when outfielder **Josh Anderson** was traded to Detroit. Darrow, who has used a side-arm delivery since undergoing Tommy John surgery in 2004, was rated the Tigers' 14th-best prospect over the winter by Baseball America. Darrow was assigned to the M-Braves after posting a combined 5-3 record with a 2.02 ERA in 47 relief outings between Class A and Double-A in 2008...

Centerfielder **Gorkys Hernandez** could be on the verge of a productive season. A hamstring injury sidelined him during the first half of 2008 and limited him in the running game even after he returned to the lineup. Hernandez may be the fastest player in the Atlanta organization and entered the season healthy.

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

THE PELICANS opened the season with an all-left-handed starting rotation. The starters include **Edgar Osuna**, **Cole Rohrbough**, **Jeff Locke**, **Carlos Rivas** and **Jose Ortegano**. Osuna received the Opening Night start and allowed one run and two hits over four innings. Righthander **Erik Cordier** was expected to open the season in the rotation before he suffered a hairline fracture on a finger on his throwing hand during the last week of spring training. Cordier, who has been working his way back from Tommy John surgery for the past two years after being acquired from the Royals for shortstop **T.J. Pena** in March 2007, is expected to be back on the mound by early May...

Michael Fisher, a sixth-round draft pick in 2007 out of Georgia Tech, has moved to second base after seeing most of his activity at shortstop last year at Rome. **Chad Lundahl** is expected to handle the shortstop duties for the Pelicans in 2009, but he opened the year on the disabled list with an oblique injury. **Robert Alvarez** handled the position in Lundahl's absence...

Donnell Linares is the Pelicans' starting third baseman. Signed last summer after defecting from Cuba, the 25-year-old Linares showed solid defensive ability during spring training, along with a potent bat. He should make the lineup consisting of **Jason Heyward**, **Freddie Freeman** and **Cody Johnson** even more powerful...

Someone forgot to tell Johnson that the Carolina League in general and BB&T Coastal Field in particular is not hitter friendly. The leftfielder hit a home run on Opening Night, a 360-foot blast to the opposite field, and had three homers after his first four games...

After setting a franchise record for attendance in 2008, the Pelicans continued their momentum with an Opening Night sellout

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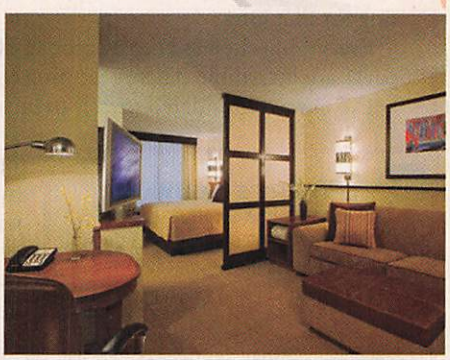

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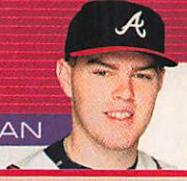

DRIVING RUNS HOME IS WHAT I LIVE FOR

EDITOR'S NOTE

Myrtle Beach first baseman Freddie Freeman is considered one of the top prospects in the Atlanta organization after he paced the farm system last year with 155 hits and 95 RBIs at Class A Rome. Drafted in the second round by the Braves in 2007, Freeman was considered to be a premier left-handed pitching prospect by many teams, but preferred to be a position player rather than a pitcher. Only 19 years old, the 6-5, 220-pound Californian was a non-roster invitee to major league spring training.

I'M SMILING A LOT, because everything about the Myrtle Beach ballpark (BB&T Coastal Field) is so nice. I hear it can get pretty warm around here during the summer, but I don't know if it can get hotter than the Gulf Coast League, which I went through two years ago.

That was an experience in itself. Coming from California, I was not used to 100-degree temperatures and terrible humidity. But most people have to go through it, and I believe it helps you appreciate what you have later.

So far, the minor leagues have been what I expected, for the most part. I knew baseball was going to be fun. The one thing I didn't expect was the long bus rides and how you feel trying to get ready for a game after riding for 10 hours. I know I'm young, but your body still takes a beating when you're sitting for that long.

Everything else has been awesome. The fans are great, and most of the ballparks are incredible. There's nothing else I'd rather be doing.

I've always considered myself to be a hitter, and I never thought of myself as a pitcher. On the mound, all I did was throw hard. I've always taken pride in my hitting. I feel like I can have success with the bat, regardless of where I play.

> "IF THERE'S A GUY ON BASE, I'M GOING UP TO THE PLATE TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO BRING HIM HOME."

I have a lot of confidence in my hitting ability, and I never put a lot of pressure on myself. When I go into a slump, I feel I'm able to make the adjustments as fast as possible. I was able to do that last year by fixing a few things and staying strong. What I accomplished last year is my goal for this season, which is to stay consistent and remain healthy throughout the year.

Driving in runs - that's what I live for. If there's a guy on base, I'm going up to the plate trying to do everything in my power to bring him home. If I can't get him in, I'm at least going to get him over, so the guy behind me can get the RBI. I love to hit with runners on base, and I have a good feeling that I will have plenty of opportunities to do that this season with the team we have in Myrtle Beach.

Jason Heyward and I have been together the entire time since we signed. We never compete against one another. We're always rooting for each other. It's also nice to have Cody Johnson and Donell Linares hitting behind us, because if the other team doesn't want to pitch to us, those guys are pretty dangerous hitters, too. Plus, when the guys ahead of us get on base, that makes it even tougher for teams to pitch around us.

As for the attention I've received, I really don't focus on what's going on outside the game. When I'm on the field, I just try to play and let other people do the talking. I appreciate the fact that people seem to like the way I play, and I feel fortunate to be able to play professional baseball.

Being in big league camp for my first time this spring was a blast. I never thought I'd get there that early in my career. When they told me I'd be going, I was so excited. I tried to take in everything I could and work as hard as possible to make improvements.

If I'm fortunate enough to be there again next year, I'm going to do the same thing while trying to have fun by playing. Of course, I'm the type of person who gets excited no matter where I go, even if it's a Little League field.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

on April 9 that equaled the all-time single-game record of 6,599. Baseball America magazine recently rated BB&T Coastal Field as the top ballpark in the Carolina League.

ROME
CLASS A

IT WOULD BE difficult to find a more talented rotation at the low Class A level than the one at Rome. Manager **Randy Ingle** sports a starting staff that includes **Zeke Spruill**, **Randall Delgado**, **Paul Clemens**, **J.J. Hoover**, **Richard Sullivan** and **Jacob Thompson**. All are considered to be among the Braves' top pitching prospects. "Our staff has a chance to be very good," Ingle said. "When you look at the quantity of quality arms that we have on this staff, you realize it's something that's pretty rare at this level."...

Hoover struck out nine of the 13 Charleston batters he faced over 4 1/3 shutout innings of relief during his season debut on April 11...

Spruill, who pitched the best among the Braves' top draft picks last year by going 7-0 in the Gulf Coast League, worked four shutout innings and allowed five hits while striking out five on Opening Night at Charleston. Spruill relieved Sullivan, who was also scheduled to start the home opener at State Mutual Stadium...

Third baseman **Samuel Sime**, who struggled last year after hitting .295 in the Gulf Coast League in 2007, followed a strong showing in spring training with a 3-for-4 outing that included a double and an RBI on Opening Night.

ORGANIZATIONAL

THE ROME rotation does not contain lefthanders **Brett DeVall** and **Tyler Stovall**, Atlanta's first two picks in the 2008 draft. DeVall and Stovall are in extended spring training and are expected to open the season at short-season Danville in mid-June. **Lance Niekro**, the son of the late **Joe Niekro** and nephew of **Phil Niekro**, is also in extended spring training, attempting to build a career as a knuckleball pitcher. He played in 195 major league games as a first baseman with San Francisco for parts of four seasons, the last coming in 2007...

The Braves released seven right-handed pitchers during spring training - **Casey Beck**, **Emilian Fruto**, **Joe Johnson**, **Sung Ki Jung**, **Michael Nix**, **Zach Schreiber** and **Ferdin Tejeda**.

OPENING DAY ROSTERS

GWINNETT
TRIPLE A

PITCHERS
MANNY ACOSTA
FRANCISLEY BUENO
MARIANO GOMEZ
VLADIMIR NUNEZ
JO-JO REYES
TOMMY HANSON
BOONE LOGAN
KRIS MEDLEN
JAMES PARR
TODD REDMOND
LUIS VALDEZ

CATCHERS
J.C. BOSCAN
ALVIN COLINA

INFIELDERS
BARBARO CANIZARES
BROOKS CONRAD
DIORY HERNANDEZ
J.C. HOLT
VAN POPE
WES TIMMONS

OUTFIELDERS
GREGOR BLANCO
JOE BORCHARD
REID GORECKI
BRANDON JONES

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

PITCHERS
BRETT BUTTS
KYLE COFIELD
RAFAEL CRUZ
RUDY DARROW
BRYAN DUMESNIL
DUSTIN EVANS (DL)
NICK FELLMAN
JEROME GAMBLE
KEVIN GUNDERSON (DL)
DEUNTE HEATH
MOISES HERNANDEZ (DL)
JEFF LYMAN
STEPHEN MAREK
RYNE REYNOSO
JONNY VENTERS

CATCHERS
PHILLIP BRITTON
JOSE CAMARENA

INFIELDERS
ERIC CAMPBELL
GREG CREEK (DL)
JAVIER GUZMAN
BRANDON HICKS
TRAVIS JONES
KALA KA'AIHUE
KODY KIRKLAND
ERNESTO MEJIA (DL)

OUTFIELDERS
WILLIE CABRERA
GORKYS HERNANDEZ
JON-MARK OWINGS (DL)
CONCEPCION RODRIGUEZ
MATT YOUNG

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

PITCHERS
MICHAEL BROADWAY
ERIK CORDIER (DL)
CODY GEARRIN
LEE HYDE
CRAIG KIMBREL
JEFF LOCKE
MICHAEL MEHLICH
JOSE ORTEGANO
EDGAR OSUNA
THOMAS PALICA
CARLOS RIVAS
CHAD RODGERS
COLE ROHRBOUGH
CHRIS VINES (DL)
TYLER WILSON

CATCHERS
BENJI JOHNSON
MATTHEW KENNELLY

INFIELDERS
MICHAEL FISHER
FREDDIE FREEMAN
RANDY GRESS
DONNELL LINARES
CHAD LUNDAHL (DL)
ROBERT MARCIAL
COLE MILES
STEVEN SHULTS

OUTFIELDERS
QUENTIN DAVIS
JASON HEYWARD
CODY JOHNSON

ROME
CLASS A

PITCHERS
BRANDON BEACHY
YELIAR CASTRO
JAYE CHAPMAN
PAUL CLEMENS
RANDALL DELGADO
DAVID FRANCIS
J.J. HOOVER
CLAYTON MCMILLAN
ANGELO PAULINO
BENINO PRUNEDA
ZEKE SPRUILL
RICHARD SULLIVAN
JAKE THOMPSON

CATCHERS
BRAEDEN SCHLEHUBER
JESUS SUCRE

INFIELDERS
RYAN BARBA
JOEL CAMPUSANO
CHAIS FULLER
GERARDO RODRIGUEZ
SAMMY SIME

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APRIL/MAY

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26 1:00 PM FSS CIN	27 7:00 PM PTV STL	28 7:00 PM PTV STL	29 7:00 PM PTV STL		1 7:30 PM PTV HOU	2 3:30 PM FOX HOU
3 1:30 PM FSS HOU	4 7:00 PM PTV NYM	5 7:00 PM PTV NYM	6 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	7 12:00 PM SPSO FLA	8 7:00 PM PTV PHI	9 3:30 PM FOX PHI
10 1:30 PM FSS TBS PHI	11 7:00 PM PTV NYM	12 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	13 1:00 PM SPSO NYM	14	15 7:30 PM PTV ARI	16 7:00 PM PTV ARI
17 1:30 PM FSS ARI	18 7:00 PM PTV COL	19 7:00 PM PTV COL	20 7:00 PM SPSO COL	21 7:00 PM SPSO COL	22 7:30 PM PTV TOR	23 7:00 PM PTV TOR
24 1:30 PM FSS TOR	25 4:00 PM SPSO SF	26 10:00 PM SPSO SF	27 10:00 PM SPSO SF	28 9:30 PM SPSO ARI	29 9:30 PM SPSO ARI	30 4:00 PM FOX ARI
31 4:00 PM FSS ARI						

JUNE

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 7:00 PM PTV CHC	3 7:00 PM PTV CHC	4 7:00 PM SPSO CHC	5 7:30 PM PTV MIL	6 7:00 PM PTV MIL
7 1:30 PM FSS MIL	8 7:00 PM SPSO PIT	9 7:00 PM PTV PIT	10 7:00 PM PTV PIT	11 1:00 PM SPSO PIT	12 7:00 PM SPSO BAL	13 7:00 PM SPSO BAL
14 1:30 PM FSS BAL	15	16 7:00 PM SPSO CIN	17 7:00 PM SPSO CIN	18 12:30 PM SPSO CIN	19 7:00 PM PTV BOS	20 7:00 PM PTV BOS
21 1:30 PM FSS BOS	22	23 7:00 PM PTV NYY	24 7:00 PM PTV NYY	25 7:00 PM PTV NYY	26 7:30 PM PTV BOS	27 4:00 PM FOX BOS
28 1:30 PM FSS BOS	29	30 7:00 PM PTV PHI				

JULY

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 7:00 PM PTV PHI	2 7:00 PM SPSO PHI	3 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	4 1:00 PM SPSO WAS
5 1:30 PM FSS WAS	6 8:00 PM CHC	7 8:00 PM SPSO CHC	8 2:00 PM SPSO CHC	9 8:30 PM SPSO COL	10 9:00 PM SPSO COL	11 8:00 PM SPSO COL
12 3:00 PM FSS COL	13	14 8:00 PM ST. LOUIS ALL-STAR GAME FOX	15	16 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	17 7:30 PM PTV NYM	18 4:00 PM FOX NYM
19 6:00 PM ESPN NYM	20 7:00 PM SPSO SF	21 7:00 PM PTV SF	22 7:00 PM PTV SF	23 1:00 PM SPSO SF	24 8:00 PM SPSO MIL	25 7:00 PM SPSO MIL
26 2:00 PM FSS MIL	27	28 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	29 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	30 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	31 7:30 PM PTV LA	

2009 SCHEDULE

AUGUST

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 4:00 PM FOX LA
2 1:30 PM FSS LA	3 10:00 PM SPSO SD	4 10:00 PM SPSO SD	5 3:30 PM SPSO SD	6 10:00 PM SPSO LA	7 10:00 PM SPSO LA	8 10:00 PM SPSO LA
9 4:00 PM FSS LA	10	11 7:00 PM PTV WAS	12 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	13	14 7:30 PM PTV PHI	15 4:00 PM FOX PHI
16 1:30 PM FSS PHI	17	18 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	19 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	20 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	21 7:30 PM PTV FLA	22 7:00 PM PTV FLA
23 1:30 PM FSS FLA	24	25 7:00 PM SPSO SD	26 7:00 PM SPSO SD	27 7:00 PM SPSO SD	28 7:00 PM SPSO PHI	29 7:00 PM SPSO PHI
30 1:30 PM FSS PHI	31 7:00 PM SPSO FLA					

SEPT./OCT.

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	2 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	3 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	4 7:30 PM SPSO CIN	5 7:00 PM SPSO CIN
6 1:30 PM FSS CIN	7	8 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	9 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	10 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	11 8:00 PM SPSO STL	12 4:00 PM FOX STL
13 2:00 PM FSS STL	14	15 7:00 PM PTV NYM	16 7:00 PM PTV NYM	17 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	18 7:30 PM PTV PHI	19 7:00 PM PTV PHI
20 1:30 PM FSS PHI	21 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	22 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	23 7:00 PM NYM	24	25 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	26 1:00 PM SPSO WAS
27 1:30 PM FSS WAS	28 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	29 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	30 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	1 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	2 7:30 PM SPSO WAS	3 7:00 PM SPSO WAS
4 1:30 PM FSS WAS						

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GAME BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC.	POS	GB
1	4/5	PHI	A	W	4-1	Lowe (1-0)	McCann (1), Francoeur (1), Schafer (1)	1-0	1	+1/2
2	4/7	PHI	A	W	4-0	Jurrjens (1-0)	Johnson (1), Jones (1)	2-0	T-1	—
3	4/8	PHI	A	L	11-12	Boyer (0-1)	McCann (2), Schafer (2), Diaz (1)	2-1	3	-1
4	4/10	WAS	H	W	6-5 (10)	Campillo (1-0)	Escobar (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/11	WAS	H	W	5-3	Kawakami (1-0)	Johnson (2)	4-1	T-1	—
6	4/12	WAS	H	W	8-5	Jurrjens (2-0)	—	5-1	T-1	—

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INDIVIDUAL GAME TICKETS

Single game tickets - with the exception of the June 23-25 series with the Yankees and the June 26-28 series with the Red Sox - are available at braves.com/tickets, the Braves box office at Turner Field, by calling 1-800-326-4000, and at all TicketMaster outlets.

Tickets for the Yankees and Red Sox games are now available as part of various multi-game packages at savings of up to 27 percent and can be purchased at braves.com/tickets or by calling (404) 577-9100. Individual tickets for those games will go on sale at a later date.

LOCATION	PRICE*	PREMIUM#	SEASON+
Skyline@	$1	$1	NA
Upper Pavilion	$6	$6	$3
Upper Reserved	$8	$12	NA
Upper Box	$12	$16	$10
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$22	$26	$12
Terrace Reserved	$24	$28	$22
Field Reserved	$26	$30	$24
Club Pavilion	$28	$32	$26
Terrace Level	$36	$40	$30
Field Level	$36	$40	$30
Club Level	$38	$42	$34
Dugout Level	$60	$64	$52
Henry Aaron Seats	$70	$74	$60

* Excluding June 23-25.
# All Friday and Saturday regular season games.
+ Season ticket price per game.
@ Available 3 hours before game at Turner Field box office.

GROUP TICKETS

Per ticket discounts are available to groups of 20 or more.
Call (404) 577-9100 for information.

FLEX PLANS

Priced as low as $99 (9 games/upper box location). Pick as few as 9 games or as many as 83 games and save up to $6 per ticket.
Exchange tickets up to 24 hours prior to start of any game in your plan.

Location	Regular/Premium	Flex Price	Yankees/Red Sox	Flex Price
Golden Moon Casino	$38/$42	$37	$48	$42
Terrace	$36/$40	$35	$46	$40
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$22/$26	$21	$32	$26
Upper Box	$12/$16	$11	$22	$16

WEEKEND PLAN

Get the same location for 30 weekend games.

Field Level	$960
Golden Moon Casino	$1,080
Outfield Pavilion	$510
Upper Box	$330

6-GAME PACKS

Terrace Level	$220 per seat
Outfield Pavilion	$136 per seat
Upper Box	$76 per seat

YANKEES PACKAGE

June 23	Yankees
June 24	Yankees
June 25	Yankees
July 23	San Francisco
Aug. 23	Florida
Sept. 20	Philadelphia

RED SOX PACKAGE

June 26	Red Sox
June 27	Red Sox
June 28	Red Sox
Aug. 16	Philadelphia
Aug. 27	San Diego
Sept. 17	Mets

20-GAME PLANS

Get the same seat for every pre-selected game in the Field Level ($640 for 20 games) or Lexus Level ($720 for 20 games). Four different packages available (visit braves.com to see specific dates):

MURPHY PLAN

Variety of Tuesday and Friday games.

COX PLAN

Variety of Wednesday and Saturday games.

NIEKRO PLAN

Variety of Thursday and Sunday games.

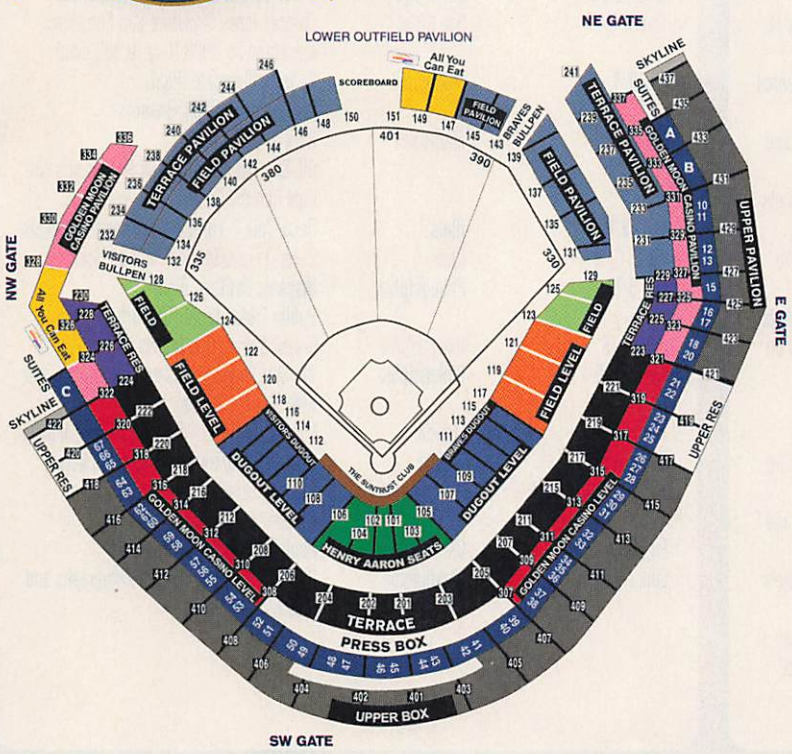
SPAHN PLAN

Variety of key matchup weekday games.

TICKET SPECIALS

* $1 Skyline Seats – Available three hours before every game at the Turner Field Box Office.
* Family Value Plan - 4 tickets, 4 hotdogs, 4 Cokes, a Braves yearbook, and a parking pass for as low as $59 (37 percent savings), available Sunday through Thursday (excluding June 23-25).
* Coca-Cola Two-For-One Tuesdays – Two Upper Reserved tickets for the price of one every Tuesday (excluding June 23-25).
* Two-For-One Wednesdays – Two Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets for the price of one every Wednesday (excluding June 23-25).
* ampm All You Can Eat Seats – For as low as $45, enjoy all the peanuts and crackerjacks, hotdogs, hamburgers, sodas, and more, for one low all-inclusive price.
* College, Military, and AAA Discount – Two Upper Box tickets for the price of one with a valid college or military ID or valid AAA member card (excluding June 23-28).
* Ultimate Kids Days – Tickets for all fans 14 and under are $5 on Sunday, June 7 and Sunday, Aug. 2. Young fans can also participate in pre-game parades around the field and be eligible to win several special experiences, including serving at the team's Honorary Team Captain or Guest Public Address Announcer.
* Publix Friday Night Fireworks (every Friday home game).
* All-Star Sundays (every Sunday home game): Kids run the bases, and Braves alumni autograph signings.

TURNER FIELD SEATING



HALF SEASON TICKET PLAN

Get the same location to 42 pre-selected games, including Opening Night, all Friday and Saturday games, and at least one game against all 2009 visiting teams.

Field Level	$1,344
Golden Moon Casino	$1,512
Outfield Pavilion	$714
Upper Box	$462

4-GAME PACKS

TERRACE $140
OUTFIELD PAVILION $84
UPPER BOX $44

FRIDAY FIREWORKS
May 1 vs. Astros, May 22 vs. Jays, June 5 vs. Brewers, July 31 vs. Dodgers

SUMMER SATURDAYS
June 6 vs. Brewers, July 18 vs. Mets, Aug. 1 vs. Dodgers, Aug. 15 vs. Phillies

NL EAST
July 17 vs. Mets, Aug. 21 vs. Marlins, Sept. 19 vs. Phillies, Oct. 3 vs. Nats

TERRACE $145
OUTFIELD PAVILION $89
UPPER BOX $49

SUNDAY PACKAGE
June 28 vs. Red Sox, July 19 vs. Mets, Aug. 2 vs. Dodgers, Sept. 6 vs. Reds

THURSDAY PACKAGE
June 4 vs. Cubs, June 25 vs. Yankees, July 16 vs. Mets, Oct. 1 vs. Nats

EAST COAST FIREWORKS
June 26 vs. Red Sox, Aug. 14 vs. Phillies, Sept. 18 vs. Phillies, Oct. 2 vs. Nats

TUESDAY PACKAGE
June 23 vs. Yankees, June 30 vs. Phillies, July 21 vs. Giants, Sept. 15 vs. Mets

TERRACE $145
OUTFIELD PAVILION $59
UPPER BOX $49

WEDNESDAY PACKAGE
June 3 vs. Cubs, June 24 vs. Yankees, Aug. 12 vs. Nats, Aug. 26 vs. Padres

OUTFIELD PAVILION $170

ALL-YOU CAN EAT PLAN A
May 23 vs. Jays, June 25 vs. Yankees, June 27 vs. Red Sox, Aug. 2 vs.Dodgers

ALL-YOU-CAN EAT PLAN B
June 23 vs. Yankees, June 26 vs. Red Sox, Aug. 1 vs. Dodgers, Sept. 19 vs.Phillies

ALL-YOU-CAN EAT PLAN C
June 24 vs. Yankees, June 28 vs. Red Sox, July 18 vs. Mets, Aug. 15 vs.Phillies

Braves Promotion Schedule

Date	Opponent	Promotion/Theme
Tue., 4/28	St. Louis	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 4/29	St. Louis	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Thurs., 4/30	Off Day	Atlanta Braves Foundation Golf Classic
Fri., 5/1	Houston	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 5/3	Houston	Bark in the Park #1 All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 5/5	Mets	Cinco de Mayo Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Fri., 5/15	Arizona	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sat., 5/16	Arizona	"Jerseys Off Our Backs" for Muscular Dystrophy Assoc. - Presented by Majestic
Sun., 5/17	Arizona	Latin Day All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 5/19	Colorado	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 5/20	Colorado	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Thurs., 5/21	Colorado	'70s Braves Cap Giveaway presented by NAPA (first 10,000 fans)
Fri., 5/22	Toronto	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sat., 5/23	Toronto	Memorial Day Celebration featuring Military Appreciation Day
Sun., 5/24	Toronto	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 6/2	Cubs	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 6/3	Cubs	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Fri., 6/5	Milwaukee	Prostate Cancer Awareness Night Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sat., 6/6	Milwaukee	Baseball 101 presented by Publix
Sun., 6/7	Milwaukee	Ultimate Kids Day – $5 tickets for fans 14 and under Brian McCann Signature Bat Day presented by Home Depot (first 15,000 fans) All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 6/9	Pittsburgh	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 6/10	Pittsburgh	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Thurs., 6/11	Pittsburgh	'80s Braves Cap Giveaway presented by NAPA (first 10,000 fans)
Tue., 6/23	Yankees	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 6/24	Yankees	Braves Cinch Bag Giveaway presented by Delta Air Lines (first 40,000 fans) 2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Fri., 6/26	Boston	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sat., 6/27	Boston	Braves Rally Flag Giveaway presented by NAPA
Sun., 6/28	Boston	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 6/30	Philadelphia	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Tue., 6/30- Thurs. 7/2	Philadelphia	Braves Wives Toy Drive - donate new, unwrapped toy for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and receive Braves autographed item

Date	Opponent	Promotion/Theme
Wed., 7/1	Philadelphia	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Thurs., 7/2	Philadelphia	Independence Day Post-Game Fireworks
Thurs., 7/16	Mets	Braves Player Card Deck Giveaway presented by Academy Sports + Outdoors
Fri., 7/17 – Sun. 7/19	Mets	Atlanta Braves Foundation Weekend
Fri., 7/17 –Sat. 7/18	Mets	Coca-Cola Recycling Awareness Days
Fri., 7/17	Mets	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 7/19	Mets	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 7/21	San Francisco	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 7/22	San Francisco	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Thurs., 7/23	San Francisco	Braves Road Cap Giveaway presented by NAPA (first 10,000 fans)
Fri., 7/31	Dodgers	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 8/2	Dodgers	Ultimate Kids Day – $5 tickets for fans 14 and under All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 8/11	Washington	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 8/12	Washington	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Fri., 8/14	Philadelphia	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 8/16	Philadelphia	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Fri., 8/21	Florida	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 8/23	Florida	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 8/25	San Diego	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 8/26	San Diego	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Thurs., 8/27	San Diego	Chipper Jones Signature Cap Giveaway presented by NAPA (first 10,000 fans)
Fri., 9/4	Cincinnati	Roberto Clemente Night Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 9/6	Cincinnati	Bark in the Park #2 All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 9/15	Mets	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 9/16	Mets	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Fri., 9/18	Philadelphia	Hispanic Heritage Night Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sat., 9/19	Philadelphia	Breast Cancer Awareness Night
Sun., 9/20	Philadelphia	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases
Tue., 9/29	Florida	Coca-Cola 2-For-1 Upper Reserved tickets
Wed., 9/30	Florida	2-For-1 Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets
Fri., 10/2- Sun. 10/4	Washington	Fan Appreciation and Atlanta Braves Foundation Weekend
Fri., 10/2	Washington	Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Sun., 10/4	Washington	All-Star Sunday - Alumni Autographs and Kids Run the Bases

All promotions are subject to change.

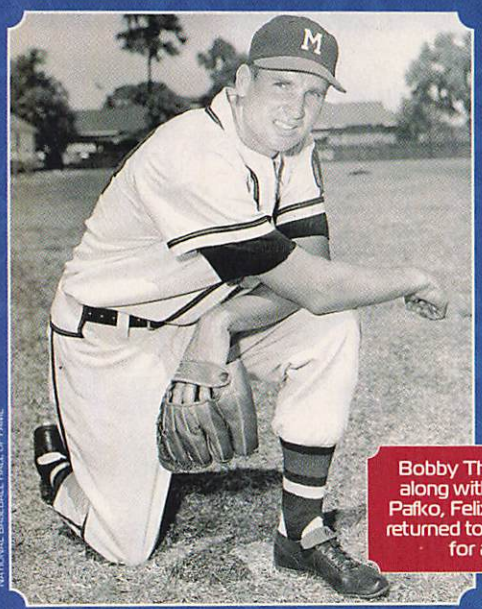
Spring TRAINING INDIVIDUAL STATS

Final Record 21-12
Hitters ranked by batting average.
Pitchers ranked by ERA.

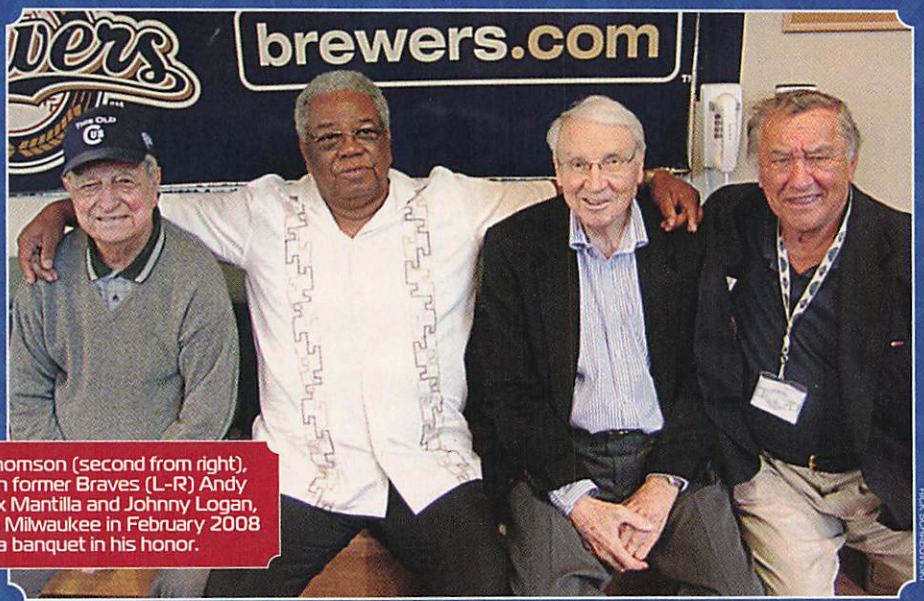
BATTER	AVG	SLG	OBP	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO
SAMMONS	.379	.793	.419	12	29	8	11	3	0	3	7	23	2	3
C. JONES	.357	.857	.424	12	28	6	10	2	0	4	10	24	4	4
FRANCOEUR	.328	.478	.382	27	67	12	22	4	0	2	13	32	7	6
SCHAFER	.324	.471	.378	21	68	13	22	5	1	1	4	32	6	17
B. JONES	.315	.389	.351	25	54	9	17	1	0	1	12	21	3	5
HEYWARD	.300	.475	.364	24	40	8	12	1	0	2	3	19	4	10
G. ANDERSON	.300	.400	.364	7	20	2	6	0	1	0	1	8	2	4
INFANTE	.296	.521	.301	27	71	8	21	4	3	2	8	37	1	7
DIAZ	.292	.492	.313	27	65	10	19	5	1	2	13	32	2	10
NORTON	.286	.490	.386	24	49	11	14	4	0	2	8	24	8	9
ESCOBAR	.284	.338	.333	29	74	12	21	4	0	0	7	25	6	3
KOTCHMAN	.283	.500	.298	19	46	6	13	1	0	3	8	23	10	2
PRADO	.273	.348	.324	28	66	10	18	2	0	1	12	23	5	5
McCANN	.269	.423	.344	12	26	2	7	1	0	1	3	11	4	4
K. JOHNSON	.243	.351	.301	28	74	13	18	5	0	1	7	26	7	12
FREEMAN	.238	.333	.250	21	42	4	10	1	0	1	9	14	1	6
D. HERNANDEZ	.212	.242	.270	20	33	4	7	1	0	0	4	8	2	6
ROSS	.175	.425	.267	19	40	5	7	1	0	3	5	17	5	11
BLANCO	.174	.304	.321	11	23	2	4	1	1	0	5	7	5	3

KEY: AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, WHIP-Walks-plus-hits per inning pitched, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO	WHIP	OBA
BENNETT	0-0	7.15	11	0	0	11.1	16	10	9	0	5	7	1.85	.320
BOYER	1-1	0.87	9	0	0	10.1	6	1	1	0	4	8	0.97	.176
CAMPILLO	0-0	6.00	3	1	0	6	8	4	4	0	3	1	1.83	.348
CARLYLE	3-0	0.90	8	0	0	10	12	1	1	0	3	7	1.50	.300
GLAVINE	2-0	2.25	3	3	0	12	12	3	3	1	0	4	1.00	.245
GONZALEZ	1-1	5.79	10	0	0	9.1	11	6	6	0	5	10	1.71	.297
HANSON	1-0	4.08	5	3	0	17.2	21	11	8	2	6	18	1.53	.296
JURRJENS	2-1	2.76	7	7	0	29.1	33	13	9	2	8	14	1.38	.287
KAWAKAMI	2-2	3.09	6	6	0	23.1	16	9	8	1	15	11	1.33	.184
LOGAN	0-1	5.59	9	0	1	9.2	12	6	6	0	7	7	1.96	.308
LOWE	2-1	3.81	6	6	0	26	26	11	11	0	2	26	1.08	.260
MOYLAN	1-0	2.57	7	0	0	7	5	2	2	0	4	5	1.28	.200
NUNEZ	0-0	0.00	5	0	1	3.1	0	0	0	0	1	4	0.30	.000
O'FLAHERTY	0-0	9.31	9	0	0	9.2	19	10	10	1	2	14	2.17	.404
REYES	2-0	2.08	4	3	0	13	9	3	3	1	3	6	0.92	.188
SORIANO	0-0	0.00	5	0	0	5	6	2	0	0	1	7	1.40	.273
VAZQUEZ	2-1	2.66	4	4	0	20.1	16	6	6	3	3	20	0.93	.219



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



Bobby Thomson (second from right), along with former Braves (L-R) Andy Pafko, Felix Mantilla and Johnny Logan, returned to Milwaukee in February 2008 for a banquet in his honor.

MIKE SCHRODER

BIG BREAK

Misfortune For Legendary Bobby Thomson Provided Jump Start To Aaron's Career

BY BRIAN KNAPP

BETWEEN SIPS OF HOT COFFEE on a cool March morning, Bobby Thomson reflected upon the past. Even at 85, his hair silver with wisdom, he can recall with crystal clarity the moment he knocked the baseball world off its axis.

Thomson has settled into a life of leisure at The Marshes of Skidway Island, a retirement village near Savannah, Ga. Though his pace has slowed, he remains an avid newspaper reader and exercises whenever possible. Doctor appointments dot his itinerary.

"There are a lot of friendly people here," Thomson said. "I've got my own little house. There's a guy down here who's 88 and can still shoot close to his age on the golf course. It's a place that provides all the facilities an older person needs. I work out, and I do my best to keep my blood flowing through my body."

The 2006 move from his home in New Jersey – where he was married and raised three children – was difficult, but it brought him closer to his daughter, Nancy Mitchell, and son-in-law, who live just a stone's throw away.

"When I first got down here, I couldn't remember all the things I had to remember - like my telephone number," Thomson said. "But I've become less dependent. Maybe it's the excitement of being in a whole new world."

Though he left professional baseball in 1960, he remains forever connected to its history. On Oct. 3, 1951, just days before his 28th birthday, Thomson catapulted himself into baseball lore when he hit a game-winning, three-run homer off Brooklyn's Ralph Branca in the bottom of the ninth inning to give the New York Giants the National League pennant. The one-out, walk-off blast, which capped a four-run ninth and propelled the Giants to a 5-4 victory at the Polo Grounds in the decisive game of a best-of-three playoff, became known as "the shot heard 'round the world" and remains one of baseball's signature moments.

"I still remember all the details," said Thomson, primarily an outfielder during his career. "[Manager Leo] Durocher came up to me and said, 'Bob, if you're ever going to hit one, hit one now.' I thought he was out of his mind. I had about 90 feet to walk to the plate. I wasn't even aware anyone else was in the ballpark. I thought to myself, 'Get up there and give yourself a chance to hit.'"

He sent Branca's second pitch into the seats in left field. Allegations of sign stealing have gained traction in recent years, but the clout has become no less significant.

"It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences for me," Thomson said. "I took the first pitch right down the middle. I thought my teammates were going to kill me. The next pitch came high and inside, and I was lucky to hit it. It started sinking, and I thought, 'That's not a home run. It's just a base hit.' By that time, it was in the crowd."

More than a half century later, it remains a popular conversation starter in Thomson's day-to-day interaction.

"I'm surprised people still talk about the home run I hit," he said. "It doesn't sit on the tip of my mind, but people come up to me – old people, baseball fans from way back – and ask me about it. I had my one moment. Some guys go through their whole baseball life without even having a chance at one moment."

Thomson played for five teams, including the Milwaukee Braves, during his 15-year career in the majors. Acquired by Milwaukee in a six-player trade with the Giants in 1954, he spent

parts of four seasons (1954-57) in a Braves uniform. His career as a Brave got off to a rocky start, and he never got on track.

"I didn't do well," Thomson said. "And John Antonelli and Don Liddle (who went from Milwaukee to the Giants) must have won 30 games that year (21 for Antonelli and 9 for Liddle). I fractured my ankle in spring training. I was having a good spring. I was still a young guy and feeling great, and I remember talking to (broadcaster) Mel Allen before the game [with the Yankees] and telling him, 'I've been pretty fortunate, Mel, to have avoided injury.'

"I got a basehit off Whitey Ford, and the next guy hit a one-hopper back to Ford – an easy doubleplay ball, especially in spring. I don't know what I was thinking. Maybe I was trying to impress the Braves by breaking up a doubleplay."

Thomson played in only 43 games for Milwaukee in 1954, and his injury helped open the door for a 20-year-old outfielder named Henry Aaron.

"Hank Aaron didn't enter my life until sometime after I had a cast on my ankle," Thomson said. "I told him, 'Hank, you realize you might not have made it if I hadn't gotten hurt.' He got a kick out of that."

During his stint with the Braves, Thomson played in 327 games and batted .242 with 38 home runs and 168 RBIs. A three-time All-Star who fell well short of expectations in Milwaukee – he knocked in 100 runs or more in each of the three years preceding his arrival – Thomson was sent back to the Giants in a four-player trade in June 1957, mere months before the Braves defeated the Yankees in the World Series.

The Scottish-born Thomson retired three years later with a .270 career average, 1,705 hits, 264 home runs and more than 1,000 RBIs.

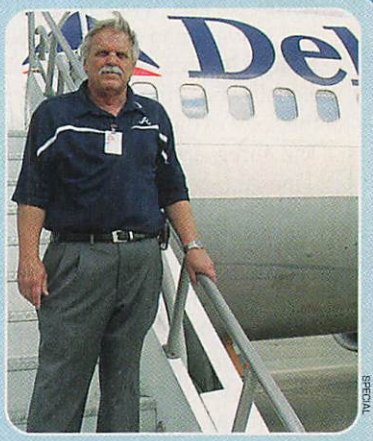
"My wife told me, 'Since we've been married, all you've done is play baseball. It's time to see what else the world has to offer,'" he said. "So I had to go out and get a job, and I ended up in the paper business in sales. I retired in 1993."

A World War II veteran, Thomson has dealt with his share of trials. His wife, Elaine, died of cancer in 1993, and he lost a son, only 38 years of age, eight years ago to a heart condition. Still, in the twilight of a wonderful life, he remains eternally grateful for the opportunities he was given.

"I've got no complaints," Thomson said. "I've been pretty lucky. I'm knocking on wood. I've just slowed down. I still get a lot of mail, and I answer it all. I am who I am."

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

MACK HONEA
CHARTER FLIGHT COORDINATOR



SPECIAL

BY STEVE FALL

WHEN THE BRAVES conclude a series and hit the road, timing becomes critical. They need to reach their destination and get sufficient rest before taking the field the next night. No matter what happens – extra inning games, long rain delays, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations – Mack Honea's job is to get them there without a hitch.

"It's my responsibility to be a troubleshooter and make sure that everything is set up the way it's supposed to be," said Honea, who sees that key details involving the flight crew, catering, ramp personnel and security screening all get handled properly.

The 35 to 40 flights the Braves take each season are chartered. They don't share flights with the public, but ride an airplane from Delta's commercial rotation reserved for them. Honea explained how they receive special treatment for security screening and catering, and get escorted on and off the airfield to save time.

Honea, whose full name is Connie Mack Honea after baseball's all-time winningest manager, has seen his share of unusual circumstances through the years. The team's plane sat on the tarmac for hours while the Braves battled Houston for 18 innings in the 2005 Division Series. Last April, a snowed out game in Colorado caused last-minute scrambling.

"Weather is more of a problem than anything else," said Honea. "We can adjust for an 11-inning ballgame. That's not a big deal. But when you can't get an airplane in or out of an airport because the FAA says you can't fly, that's when we have real problems."

To complicate matters further, some airports have curfews that prevent a plane from taking off or landing after certain hours. Having worked in several different departments during 32 years with Delta, Honea knows what it takes to overcome tough obstacles. On travel days, he maintains constant communication with Bill Acree, the Braves' director of team travel.

"The best thing about my job is the people," said Honea, who grew up in Atlanta and served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps. "People like Bobby Cox, Bill Acree, John Schuerholz, Frank Wren and a lot of the players. They make me feel so much a part of the team. They invite me in on everything. It's enjoyable to work with people of that caliber."

Honea, who also handles the Georgia Tech basketball team's flights, first worked for Delta in 1968. He started coordinating team charters in 1972, when the Atlanta Flames joined the National Hockey League. He would also work Braves trips during the final month of the regular season. In the early 1980s, Delta's marketing department took over this role through 1995. Honea has handled these responsibilities for Braves flights ever since. He officially retired from Delta in 2000 but has continued working as a contract employee for Delta Global Services.

"It's a job where you need to have experience in just about every area of the airline to know who to call when something goes wrong, and know what to do to get it fixed," said the 62-year-old Honea.

"We have to learn how to fuel aircraft. Do weight and balance. Do everything about it. I don't know that anybody could just walk in off the street and do it," said Honea.

ALUMNI NOTES

- Major League Baseball named **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74), Bill Cosby and Muhammad Ali the recipients of Beacon Awards, which recognize individuals whose lives are emblematic of the spirit of the civil rights movement. The three are expected to attend a June 20 luncheon in Cincinnati at the Duke Energy Convention Center prior to this year's Civil Rights game between the Reds and White Sox.

  The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum dedicated a permanent exhibit titled "Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream," on April 25 during a day-long program saluting Aaron and his accomplishments.

- The Cubs will honor **Greg Maddux** (RHP, 1993-2003), along with Hall of Famer Ferguson Jenkins, May 3 when they retire uniform No. 31 that they both wore.

- **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) is among five Hall of Famers scheduled to participate in the first Baseball Hall of Fame Classic game on June 21 at 2 p.m. in Cooperstown. The game will be preceded by a parade at noon and a home run hitting contest between several former major leaguers at 1 p.m.

- **Julio Franco** (1B, 2001-05, '07) will manage the rookie-level Gulf Coast Mets.

- The International League Hall of Fame inducted the late **Red Barrett** (RHP, 1943-45, '47-49) April 9 at Durham Bulls Athletic Park before the Bulls' season opener. Members of his family, including his wife, Libby, were present. Barrett still holds the major league record for fewest pitches in a game. While a member of the Braves in 1944, he used just 58 pitches to retire 27 batters against the Cincinnati Reds.

- **Johnny Blanchard** (OF, 1965) died Mar. 25 in Robbinsdale, Minn., at the age of 76.

- **Dale Murphy** (OF/1B/C, 1976-1990) was scheduled to be the featured speaker at the spring kickoff banquet of Southern Utah University's Thunderbird Club April 23. Murphy also is due to make an appearance June 6 at the Mobile BayBears' game against the Mississippi Braves at Mobile's Hank Aaron Stadium. On July 2, Murphy will make an appearance at Pringles Park, home of the West Tenn Diamond Jaxx in Jackson, Tenn., to sign autographs and pose for pictures with fans.

- As anticipated, the Red Sox put **John Smoltz** (RHP, 1988-99, 2001-08) on the disabled list to open the season. Smoltz visited the Braves' spring training clubhouse Mar. 30 when the Red Sox played at Disney.

- **Andruw Jones** (OF, 1996-2007) made the Texas Rangers' opening day roster as their fifth outfielder.

- A Houston street next to Minute Maid Park recently was renamed **Milo Hamilton** Way in honor of the former Braves broadcaster who is in his 25th season calling Astros games. At Houston's game April 8, the first 10,000 fans received replica Milo Hamilton Way street signs.

- **Will Ohman** (LHP, 2008) signed a one-year minor league contract with the Dodgers.

- The Cubs released Paul Bako (C, 2000-01) and **Mike Stanton** (LHP, 1989-95).

- The Tigers released **Gary Sheffield** (OF, 2002-03), and he signed with the Mets.

- Oakland placed **Joey Devine** (RHP, 2005-07) on the disabled list with an elbow injury.

- **Anthony Lerew** (RHP, 2005-07) signed a minor league contract with Kansas City.

- **Julian Tavarez** (RHP, 2008) signed a minor league contract with the Nationals.

- The Mets released **Tom Martin** (LHP, 2004-05) and **Matt DeSalvo** (RHP, 2008).

BIRTHDAYS

MAY

1ST	CHARLIE O'BRIEN (49)
	ARMANDO REYNOSO (43)
	MANNY ACOSTA (28)
2ND	CLAY CARROLL (68)
	JARROD SALTALAMACCHIA (24)
	JOSE ASCANIO (24)
3RD	CHRIS CANNIZZARO (71)
	GABE MOLINA (34)
4TH	BERT THIEL (83)
	KEN OBERKFELL (53)
	EDDIE PEREZ (41)
	JOE BOROWSKI (38)
6TH	DICK COLE (83)
7TH	CLAUDE RAYMOND (72)
9TH	TONY BARTIROME (77)
10TH	MERRITT RANEW (71)
11TH	MILT PAPPAS (70)
	TRENIDAD HUBBARD (43)
	KERRY LIGTENBERG (38)
12TH	FELIPE ALOU (74)
	JOE NOLAN (58)
	WES HELMS (33)
14TH	DENNIS MARTINEZ (54)
15TH	JOHN SMOLTZ (42)
	CLINT SAMMONS (26)
16TH	BOB BRUCE (76)
17TH	BILLY HOEFT (77)
	PASCUAL PEREZ (52)
	JOHN FOSTER (31)
18TH	MARCUS GILES (31)
19TH	AL SANTORINI (61)
	RICK CERONE (55)
21ST	EARL HERSH (77)
	BOBBY COX (68)
	PAUL RUNGE (51)
	TOM MARTIN (39)
22ND	RON PICHE (74)
	WALT HRINIAK (66)
	MIKE EDEN (60)
	JULIAN TAVAREZ (36)
23RD	CLYDE KING (85)
	RAMON CARABALLO (40)
	MIKE GONZALEZ (31)
24TH	DANNY BAUTISTA (37)
25TH	JOHN MONTEFUSCO (59)
	FERNANDO LUNAR (32)
26TH	EDDIE HAAS (74)
	DARRELL EVANS (62)
	RANDALL SIMON (34)
27TH	JIM VATCHER (43)
28TH	ED OLWINE (51)
	DUANE WARD (45)
29TH	ROBERTO VARGAS (80)
	BLUE MOON ODOM (64)
31ST	LARRY OWEN (54)
	KENNY LOFTON (42)

ChopTalk
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VERY BIG DEALS

THE BRAVES are the longest continuously operating franchise in sports history, dating not only to the birth of the National League in 1876, but also to the start of the National Association in 1871.

For a little perspective, consider 1871 was the year of the Great Chicago Fire. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received a patent on the telephone, Wyatt Earp set up shop in Dodge City, and Custer made his Last Stand.

The Braves, as you can see, have been around a long time, surviving two franchise relocations and several name changes. In over 130 years, only five players have been so esteemed as to have their uniform numbers retired. On July 17, Greg Maddux will become the sixth when he joins Hank Aaron (44), Eddie Mathews (41), Dale Murphy (3), Phil Niekro (35) and Warren Spahn (21) as his No. 31 is officially taken out of circulation.

There are 229 players in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Yet just 134 players' numbers have been retired. Though all teams didn't use numbers until 1932, this is still a big deal... a *very* big deal.

It's usually difficult and often impossible to plan to witness history. In this case, all you have to do to see a signature moment in Braves history is to be present at Turner Field for the Friday, July 17, game against the Mets.

You have to wait five years for Maddux's Cooperstown induction, but you also can witness his induction into the Braves Hall of Fame that same day during a luncheon in the 755 Club. Call (404) 614-2310 for ticket information.

Maddux's excellence needs no more explanation that his 194-88 record with a 2.63 ERA in 11 seasons with the Braves. He was a big deal... a *very* big deal.

Also in the *very* big deal department is news that the Braves signed Chipper Jones to a three-year contract extension through 2012, with an option for 2013. That should keep No. 10 in a Braves uniform until he's ready to ride off to his Texas ranch.

Considering that Braves icons Aaron, Mathews, Murphy, Niekro and Spahn, didn't accomplish this, gives an indication of the significance of this action. Players almost never start and finish their careers with the same team, especially in this day and age, and especially if they are talented enough to be of interest to other teams.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about the extension is Chipper's desire to remain a Brave and his willingness to work with the club to find common ground in the budget. Yes, he's made a lot of money as a Brave and will make a lot more, but the fact is that he's continually shown throughout his career the importance of taking the team into consideration when he makes decisions about his contract and even the position he plays.

He's not only one of the greatest switch-hitters of all-time and one of the greatest Braves of all-time, but he's also one of the greatest *team players* in franchise history, an uncommon characteristic and one that is not lost on his teammates, as you can see by reading Brian McCann's comments on page 22 of this issue.

At press time, the future of another big name in franchise history was in question. Tom Glavine, who appeared well on his way to returning to the rotation after off-season surgery and an excellent spring, was diagnosed with an inflamed rotator cuff. A frustrated Glavine indicated that if he can't overcome this setback in two weeks, he's likely to retire. Let's hope that's not the case.

In last month's ChopTalk, we told you about the Braves opening a training academy in Spain, the first of its kind in Europe. Now we can tell you that the Braves have signed their first European player, yet another indication of their impressive international scouting operation.

Ruben Rijkhof is a 17-year-old Dutch outfielder who was signed after a tryout at the Braves' academy in Tenerife. He's 6-foot-2, 185 pounds and reportedly has good speed, a strong arm, and power potential with the bat.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed April 22. The June issue will be mailed May 21.

BEYOND BASEBALL

BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

Using a borrowed fishing pole and eluding the "resident alligator," Jeff Francoeur hooked this large-mouth bass before a game at the Astros' training camp.

VANESSA MONTALVO

A FISH TALE

THOUGH NOT KNOWN for his bass fishing prowess, **Jeff Francoeur** managed to snag an impressive 6-pound, 4-ounce largemouth bass in the pond outside the visitor's clubhouse at the Houston Astros' spring training camp in Kissimmee, Fla., prior to the Mar. 31 exhibition game. Francoeur was just as surprised as all of his teammates by his beginner's luck. "I was using a borrowed fishing pole," he said. "I was sort of kidding around, and then I got it!" **Chipper Jones** had a little fun at Francoeur's expense when he tossed a baseball into the water trying to make him think the pond's resident alligator was on the move. "About 10 minutes after he threw the baseball, I got the fish," Francoeur said.

MANY BRAVES FAMILIES enjoyed watching the team at Turner Field during the opening weekend versus the Washington Nationals. Among those seen in the stands were **Ashley McCann** (**Brian**), **Catie Francoeur** (**Jeff**), **Leslee Diaz** (**Matt**) with son **Nathan** and daughter **Anna Grace**, **Kim Hudson** (**Tim**) and daughters **Kennedie** and **Tess** and son **Kade**, **Marisol Perez** (**Eddie**) and daughter **Maried** and son **Andres**, **Ronnie Snitker** (**Brian**) and daughter **Erin**, **Lauren Johnson** (**Kelly**), **Meredith Sammons** (**Clint**), **Yohanna Infante** (**Omar**), **Jessica Carlyle** (**Buddy**) and son **Carter** and daughter **Kennedy**, **Ginsey Boyer** (**Blaine**), **Lynn Cadahia** (**Chino**) and daughter **Lauren**, and **Gloria McDowell** (**Roger**). Former pitcher **Alejandro Pena** and his family attended the April 11 game. **Sharon Jones** (**Chipper**) and sons **Trey**, **Shea** and **Tristan** sat in the front row of the owner's box during a pre-game ceremony on April 11 to watch Chipper receive his Silver Bat for winning the batting title and the award for Braves Player of the Year from the Atlanta chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA). Sharon and the boys took a spring break trip to Miami, Fla., April 4-11...

Despite the downturn in the economy, **Tim** and **Kim Hudson** formed the Hudson Family Foundation this spring with the official launch set for June 28. "What better time than right now to raise money to help children and their families," said Kim, who is spending countless hours setting up the foundation, hiring an executive director, working with website designers, financial and legal advisors, and planning the programs which will include scholarship, reading/literacy, and grant-making components. Fans are encouraged to check out the foundation website at hudsonfamilyfoundation.com to learn more about their mission and how they can become involved. On April 2, Kim hosted a unique fundraiser for one of her favorite charities, Make-A-Wish Foundation, at The Boutique at Bella Bloom in Peachtree City. She invited friends to "shop for a cause" purchasing unique jewelry by **Nona Case**, who donated 70 percent of her proceeds to Make-A-Wish. The sale generated $1,700, which was then doubled by an anonymous donor...

Ronnie Snitker represented her husband, third base coach **Brian Snitker**, on April 9 at **Bruce Dal Canton** Tribute Night in Myrtle Beach, S.C., honoring the long-time pitching coach who died last October. Snitker was the manager at Myrtle Beach when the affiliate opened in

PATTY RASMUSSEN

The Chipper Jones family (L-R) Tristan, Sharon, Shea and Trey were in the front row to see their favorite Brave pick up the Silver Bat for winning the National League batting title.

BB

SPRING SHOWER

SPECIAL

Ginsey Boyer (L) and Gissia Nunuz (R) were among the Braves wives who attended a baby shower for Yohanna Infante (center).

WHILE STILL at spring training in March, several Braves wives hosted a baby shower for **Omar Infante**'s wife, **Yohanna**. The couple is expecting their first child, a boy, in May. Attendees included **Ginsey Boyer**, **Heather Anderson**, **Ronnie Snitker**, **Jamie Reyes**, **Lauren Johnson**, **Meredith Sammons**, **Gissia Nunez**, **Rachel Bennett** and **Leslee Diaz**.

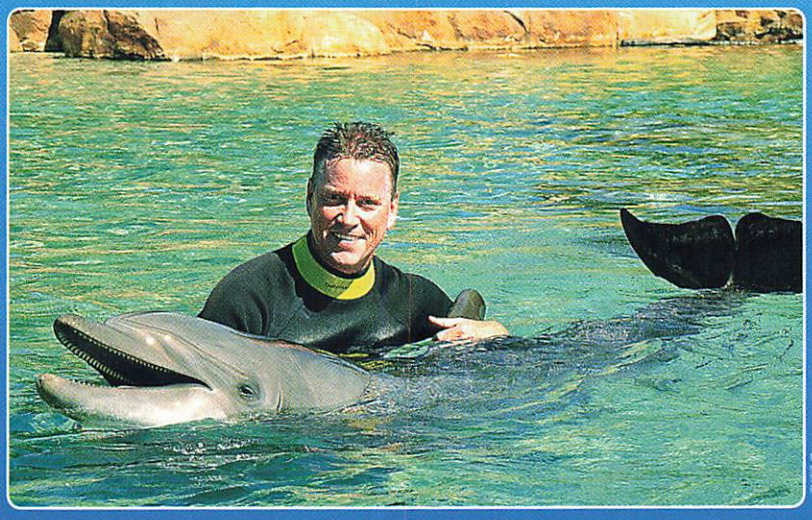
1999, and Dal Canton was the only pitching coach in Pelicans history until this season. "It was a great ceremony," said Ronnie. Former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher **Steve Blass**, now a broadcaster, who was a former teammate of Dal Canton's, threw out the ceremonial first pitch to honor his friend and shared reminiscences of their friendship and playing years. Also in attendance were members of Dal Canton's family, including his wife, **Helene**, former Braves and Pirates pitcher **Gene Garber**, Gwinnett Braves trainer **Mike Graus** and his wife, **Erica**, and Atlanta Braves director of player development **Kurt Kemp**. In addition to April 9 being designated "Bruce Dal Canton Day" in Myrtle Beach and Horry County, the Pelicans retired his number, 43, and named the home clubhouse at BB&T Coastal Field in honor of Dal Canton...

Kade Hudson turned 4 years old on April 13 and celebrated with a party at Jumping Jelly Beans, an inflatable activity center in Peachtree City on April 11. "I was dominated by a bunch of kids," said a tired dad, **Tim Hudson**, as he walked into the Braves' clubhouse after the party. The previous night's game was delayed by rain for 2 hours and 2 minutes, then went into extra innings, ending at 1:26 a.m. Hudson got home around 2 a.m. and woke at 7. "We had about 15 kids at the party for two hours," said Tim, who climbed all over the inflatables along with the kids...

Buddy Carlyle, wife, **Jessica**, and children **Carter** and **Kennedy** have permanently relocated from Nebraska to Peachtree City, about 20 miles southeast of Atlanta...

Braves president **John Schuerholz** attended the Masters practice round and Par 3 Contest at Augusta (Ga.) National Golf Club on April 8. Former Braves catcher **Bruce Benedict** attended the second round of the tournament, his first time visiting the storied golf course...

Nicole Jones, wife of former Braves outfielder **Andruw Jones**, is putting her fashion degree from Bauder College into play by starting her own hand-crafted jewelry line, Honesty. **Ashley McCann**, proprietor of Uptown Girl Boutique in Duluth, held a launch event at the shop April 16, with a portion of the proceeds going to the Rally Foundation. The pieces are also sold in Taste Clothing Boutique in Atlantic Station in Midtown Atlanta. Nicole and her two partners, **Alondeia Chaney** and **Chantel Watkins**, personally design and hand make each necklace, bracelet and headband from a variety of materials. Nicole plans to create a special bracelet in honor of the fifth anniversary of the Joneses' association with their favorite charity, Jaden's Ladder. Visit honestyjewelry.com.



SPECIAL

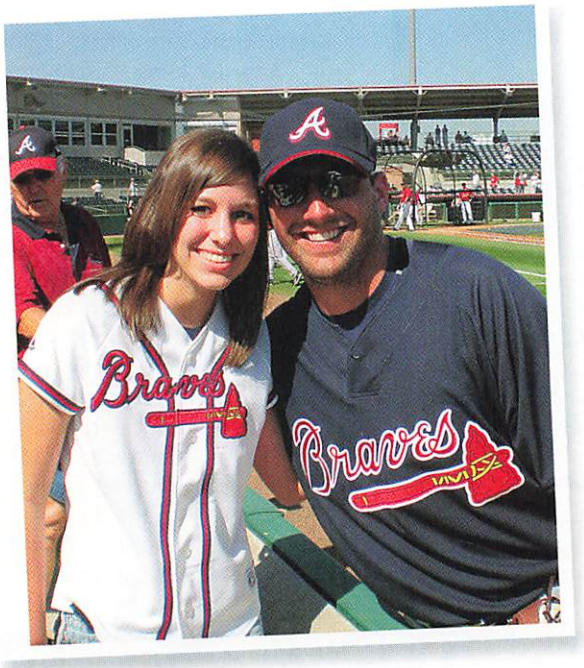
NEW FRIEND

WHILE IN FLORIDA, Tom Glavine (above) and his family visited Discovery Cove in Orlando during the last week of spring training, cavorting with Atlantic bottlenose dolphins and relaxing on the beach. Tom and **Chris Glavine** were among 11 honorees at the 34th annual 11 Alive Community Service Awards dinner and program held at downtown Atlanta's Marriott Marquis on April 1. The Glavines were toasted for their long and ongoing commitment to a variety of causes, including CURE Childhood Cancer. Tom flew back to Atlanta after pitching five innings of a spring training game in order to attend the event that raised $150,000 for the Shepherd Center, a private, non-profit hospital specializing in spinal cord injury.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



WHAT A DAY!

I have been a Braves fan all of my life, because it was one way I could spend quality time with my dad growing up. Every chance we got, my parents, sister and I traveled up to Montreal while we lived in New York and now to both Baltimore and Washington, D.C., to see our beloved Braves play. It didn't matter if they were in last place during the '80s or in first place during the 14 straight division title streak. All I wanted was to see the Braves play. One day I will get a chance to see them play at Turner Field. My then boyfriend/now husband decided to use my love of the Braves as a way to pop the question. His mom, my boyfriend, and I got tickets to the Sept. 11, 2005 game versus the Washington Nationals at RFK stadium. During the seventh-inning stretch, while they were playing "Take me out to the Ballgame", my boyfriend put his arm around me and asked me to marry him. So that day was a great day, because not only did I get engaged, but the Braves won, 9-7, thanks to a two-run home run by my absolute favorite Brave, Chipper Jones, and a home run by Andruw Jones.

BRANDY COPSEY
Waldorf, Md.

GOOD GOLLY MISS MOLLIE

Even though I live in Illinois, I have been a huge Braves fan my entire life, and I've loved Jeff Francoeur since he was in the minor leagues. I have traveled to many Braves games in Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis and Milwaukee trying to meet him and get an autograph from him. Jeff made my dream come true when I attended a spring training game in Kissimmee this year. He threw me a baseball, signed a picture, and was even kind enough to take a picture with me. He was so incredibly nice and friendly. Thank you, Jeff, for making me the happiest girl in the world!

MOLLIE McMEEN
Streator, Ill.

HALL OF FAME ENCOUNTER

One of the great pleasures at every spring training is getting to know the players and coaching staff better on the back fields as they practice. This spring, I was able to watch Lance Niekro pitching batting practice with his uncle Phil Niekro behind him on the mound observing and coaching him. He was looking very good early. I even watched Phil throw batting practice afterwards. He took time to talk with me and to pose for this picture. Needless to say, that made my day. Phil is still a great athlete and so good about taking time with the fans. The team looked great this spring!

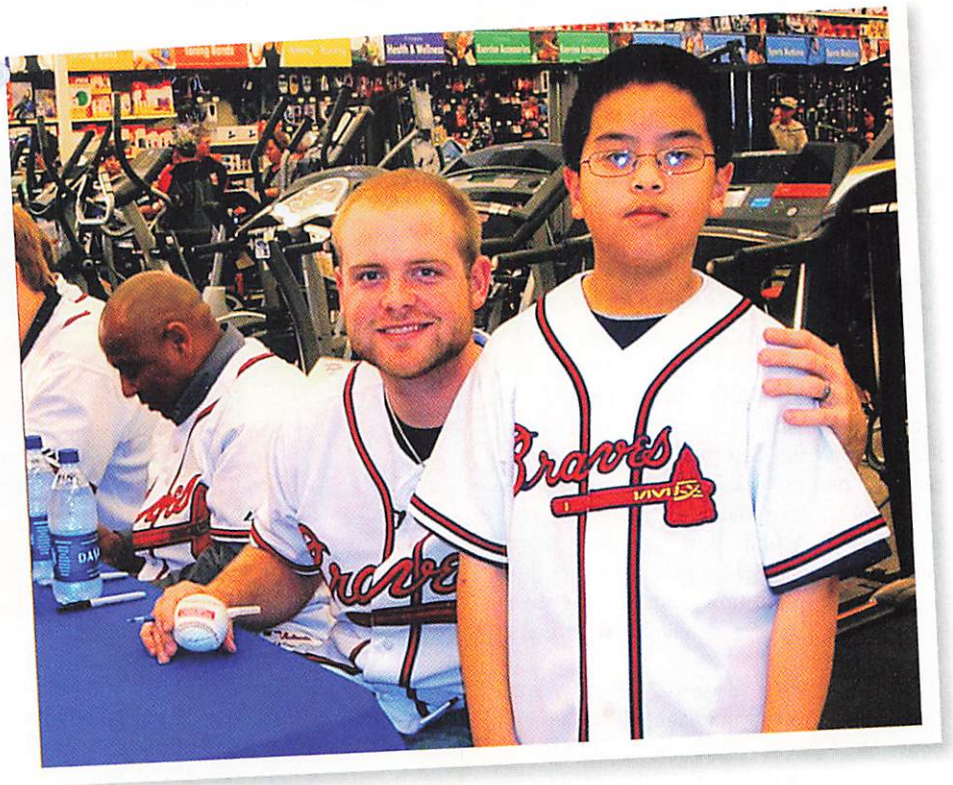
ROLAND "SIMMY" SIMONEAU
DeLand, Fla.

CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

CARAVAN KID

Thank you so much for mentioning me in the March issue (A Ride On The Caravan). You made me very happy and proud. Here's a picture of me with Brian McCann that day at Academy Sports + Outdoors in Macon.

PAOLO FRANCISCO
Bonaire, Ga.



ON THE MOVE

Another season is about to begin. I was hoping to tell you that the Braves' No. 1 fan was coming back to Atlanta, but I recently was told I'm being transferred to our home in Philadelphia. At least it's still the National League! Maybe the next go-round will include a trip back to Atlanta. I'm going to find out how to get to (Citizens Bank Park) by mass transit and put in for a day off when the Braves come to town. I hope the "boo birds" treat me as well as the Mets fans did. They always got a laugh seeing me in my Braves jersey. I don't know why! I'm excited about all there is to see in Philadelphia, and also for the baseball season to begin. Time to start another streak!

SISTER MARIAN
New York, N.Y.

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US

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Atlanta Braves
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Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

NAME THAT CLUE

GRISSOM: CHAMPION FOR THE KIDS

BY BRIAN KNAPP

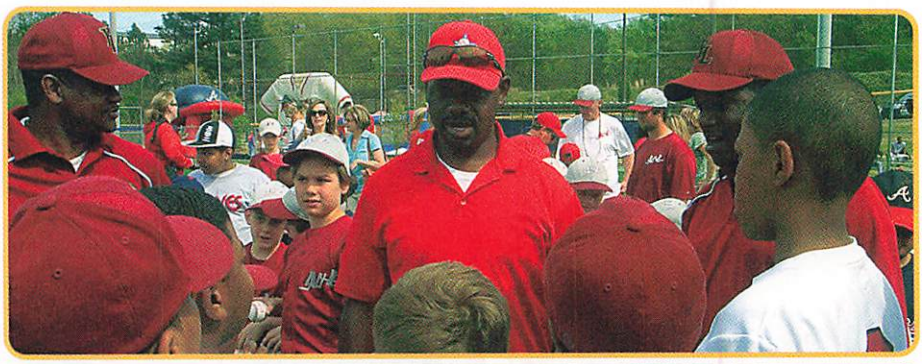
MARK THOMPSON had the if-you-build-it-they-will-come vision, but he needed someone with the financial wherewithal to bring it all together. Enter former Braves centerfielder Marquis Grissom (1995-96).

The two-time All-Star purchased a two-field baseball complex in the Atlanta suburb of Conyers from Thompson earlier this year and, on April 9, opened the Grissom Field of Dreams before hundreds of youth players, parents, coaches and well-wishers. Citing a dramatic downturn in African-American participation in the sport, Grissom sees the facility as a significant part of his plan to reconnect the two, though it will serve people of all creeds, colors and backgrounds.

"That's where it all starts," Grissom said. "You can't start playing baseball at 11 or 12 years old. Look at all the years you're missing. It's needed for all kids, especially African-Americans, but it's needed for all kids. This has been a dream come true for myself to have a facility where I can reach out to youth. That's what it's about for me. This is a place where we can make a lot more dreams come true."

The Field of Dreams will be utilized for special events, local travel baseball programs, and competition in the Marquis Grissom Baseball Association – an Atlanta-based non-profit organization established by the Atlanta native in 2006. Grissom, 41, plans to use coaches and players from visiting teams who come to Atlanta to play the Braves as instructors sporadically throughout the 2009 season.

Now the first base coach for the Washington Nationals, Grissom was joined at the Grissom Field of Dreams Spring Extravaganza by former Braves outfielder Brian Jordan (1999-2001, '05-06), Nationals bullpen coach Randy Knorr, and 1992 American League Rookie of the Year (with Milwaukee) and current Washington third base coach Pat Listach.



The day before Washington met the Braves in the Turner Field opener, Nationals first base coach and former Braves centerfielder Marquis Grissom welcomed hundreds of young ballplayers and their parents and coaches to his new baseball complex just east of Atlanta where he hopes much baseball talent will be developed.

"He's always been a guy with a great vision for kids and baseball," Jordan said. "I'm happy to help him. I really admire Marquis. So many players just ride off into the sunset."

Listach echoed those sentiments and believes the facility will work wonders in the community.

"Kids need somewhere to play," Listach said. "The ballpark is a great learning tool. You make lifelong friendships there."

Thompson, a Conyers resident who owns a grading company, says he spent nine to 10 months constructing the fields in 2003. In the six years since, they have served untold numbers of local travel baseball teams.

"I'd run it for five or six years, and I'd taken those fields as far as I could take them," Thompson said. "I felt Marquis could take it to the next level. That's why I got excited about Marquis buying them. A lot of people in Atlanta respect him. The more he and I talked before we made the deal, the more we realized we had the same things in mind. It was so weird that we were thinking the same thing, yet we didn't know each other. I was able to build them. He was able to purchase them."

Grissom, who would not disclose how much he paid for the complex, said he has received "outstanding" support from the Braves with his community outreach efforts. He plans to open similar facilities in the area and already has his eyes on a complex in Union City, southwest of Atlanta.

"It needs a lot of work," he said. "A lot of kids can't afford to play baseball, especially now with this recession. We're trying to find ways to generate funding. We need sponsorships."

For information, visit mgba.org.

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB

THE BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Fan Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org.

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

THE MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, 6700 N. Range Line Rd., Glendale, Wisc. 53209. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit milwaukeebraveshistoricalassociation.com.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

THE BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is $15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Boston-braves.com.

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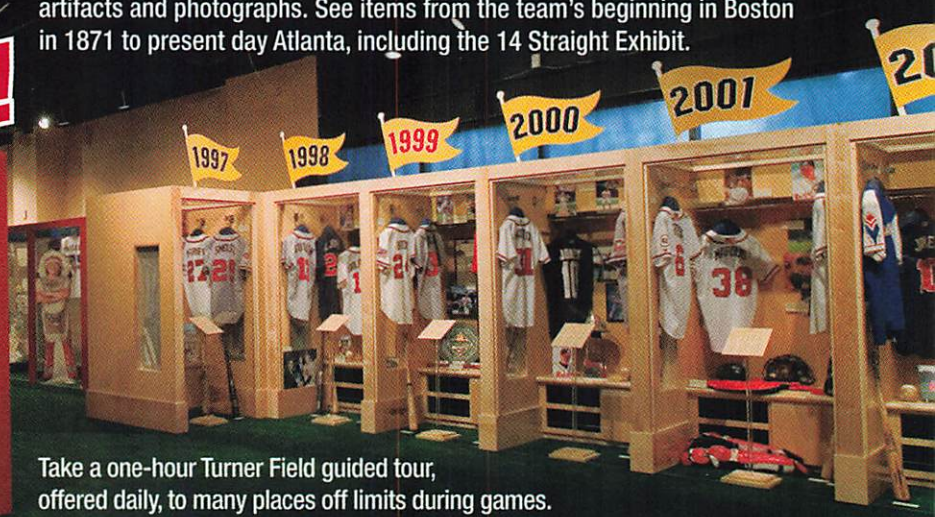

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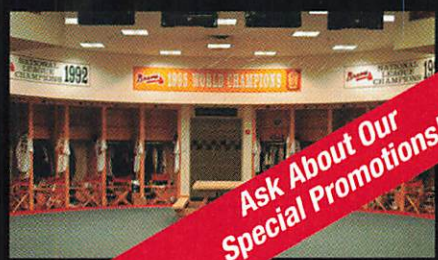

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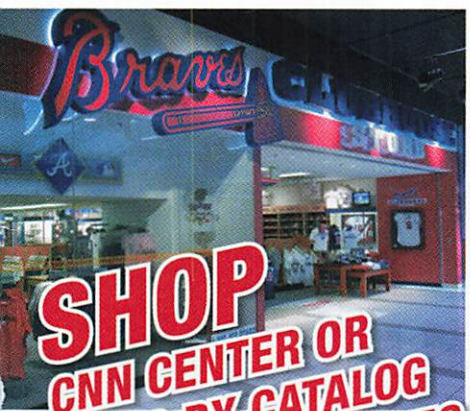

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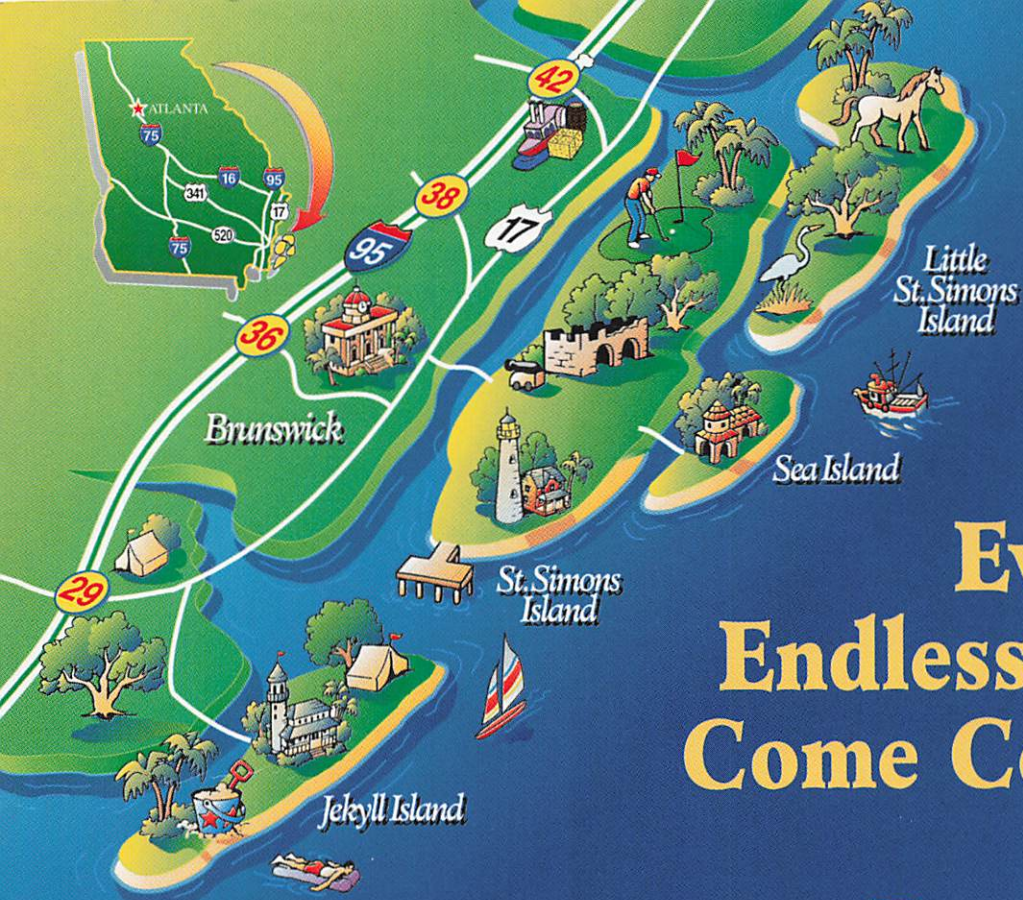

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